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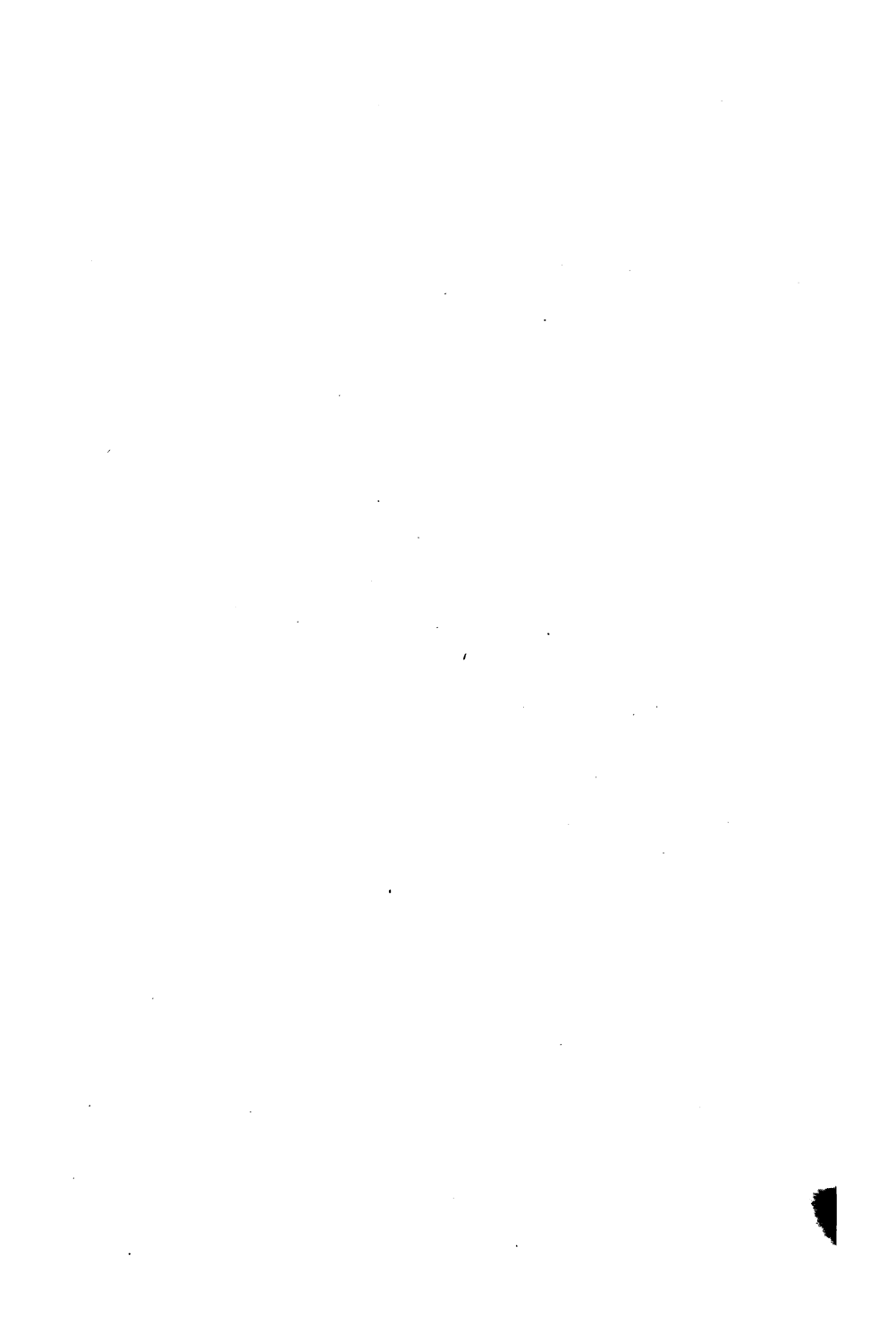
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THE LEISURE OF GOD

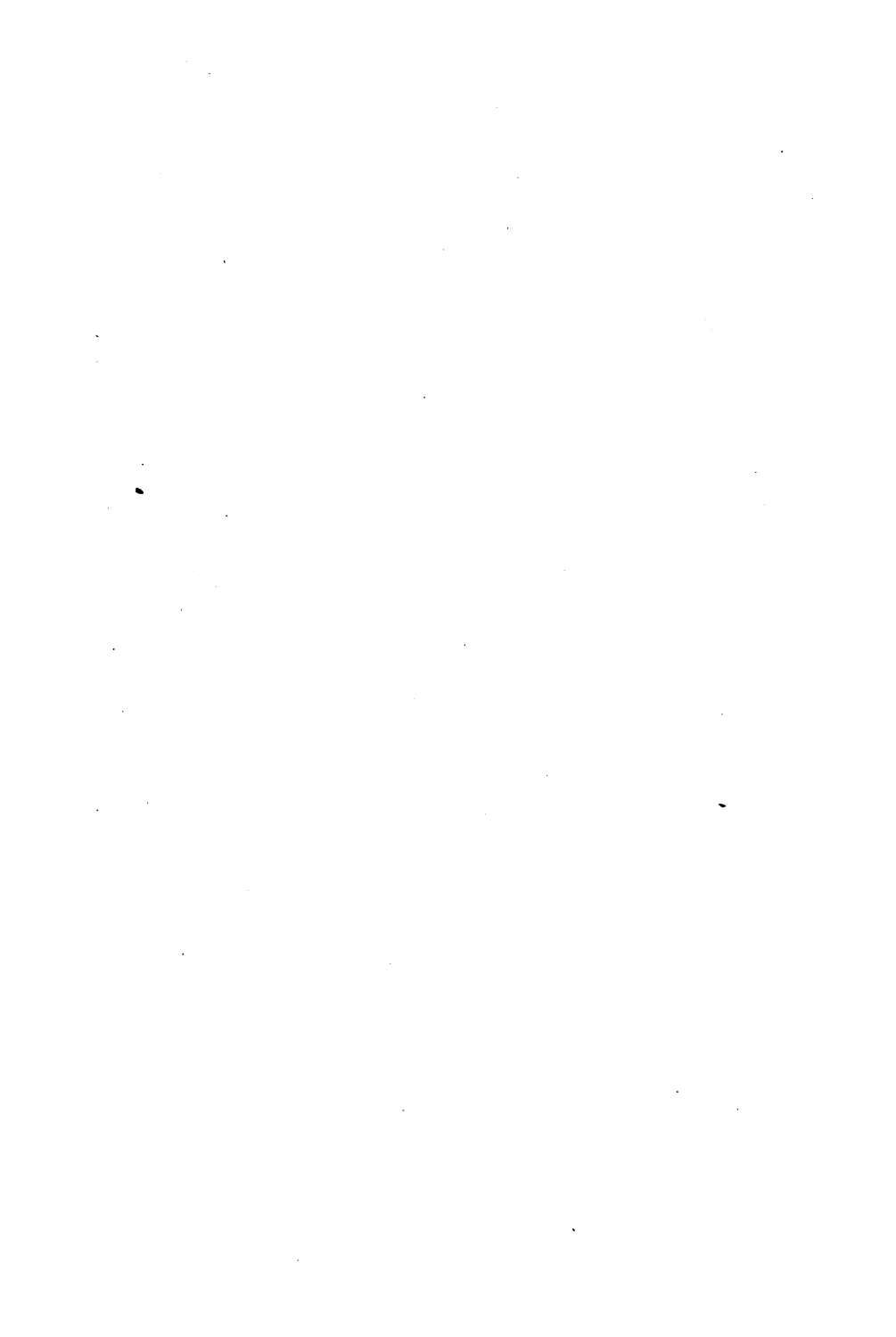
AND OTHER

STUDIES IN THE SPIRITUAL
EVOLUTION

BY

JOHN COLEMAN ADAMS

BOSTON
UNIVERSALIST PUBLISHING HOUSE
1895



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TO THE MEMORY
OF
John Greenleaf Adams
THIS VOLUME
IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED
BY HIS SON.

PREFACE.

THIS volume is presented in the belief that there are still readers who find pleasure and profit in sermons. It is addressed first of all to those who share, with the congregations to whom these discourses have been spoken, the larger faith in the power, the patience, and the victorious persistence of the Divine Love. That system of religious thought which grows out of this belief in the invincible love of the Father, working with the deliberateness, and the calm of omnipotence toward its triumph in the salvation of all souls, involves a new view of life. It presents new incentives to duty. It suggests new interpretations of discipline. It casts new lights of hope and comfort on life's disasters. These various studies upon themes related to the belief in the final triumph of good seek to frame a theory of faith and life upon the "glad tidings,"—not in any exact or formal way, but by suggestion and illustration. It is hoped

that they may serve, not only to deepen the spiritual life of those who cherish that belief, but also to commend it to many who cannot yet trust implicitly in the unconquerable Love.

One or two passages have been transferred by the author from an earlier volume to these pages, where they appear in their original setting, and where they may serve to reach a larger circle and to illustrate a broader argument.

BROOKLYN, *November*, 1894.

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THE LEISURE OF GOD.

JOB vii. 6. — "My days are swifter than a weaver's shuttle."

Ps. xc. 4. — "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night."

HUMAN consciousness knows nothing more awful than the swift flight of time. It is a fact which is realized in its fulness only by the intellect schooled and informed in the impressive details of nature and her processes. But when it fairly comes home to our minds, supported by all the facts and phenomena of the outward world, it is overwhelming. The passenger upon an ocean steamship has little idea, so long as he simply stands upon the deck, and watches the steady onward run of the vessel, what forces are at work to urge her forward. But let him go down to the heart of the ship, where the fires roar and glow, and the engines, with their rapid throbs, whirl the screw, and he will shrink before the hot haste of the powers that speed the great hull on its way. So, too, he who goes deep into the heart of nature and of life, finds in place of the seeming inertness which strikes the superficial eye, a hurry of energy which takes away his breath. The placid calm of the sky at



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out its moral weight and influence. Not a look or a thought but is laden with an effect in changing the mental and moral status of our race. Every man of us is a teacher, a workman, a separate force in the continual process of world-building and reform. Parents are everywhere teaching children, children influencing parents, friends moulding one another's thought and lives, the members of society acting and reacting upon one another. There is never a second of intermission in the business. Who has not noted the marvellous and mysterious process by which, when a sin or an abuse exists in the world, human thought is directed toward it, human conscience awakened in reference to it, the beginnings of a revolt against it started, and the growth set on foot of a sentiment which seems to spread as if by magic, and finally possesses the minds of all society? There is not an hour's remission of the work. By speech, by reading, by sermon, novel, essay, newspaper, by collision of hostile minds, by co-operation of sympathizers, by the pressure of business necessities, and by the emergencies of political progress the work is pushed. It is the most incessant process in all our complex life. While one-half the race is asleep, the other half is awake and at work. Thus the wheels of progress never stop, but revolve as incessantly as planets turn on their axes, or light rushes through all the realms of space.

It is needless to prolong these illustrations. What we have seen in this hasty glance we should find to be true of all parts and portions of this creation.

Nature's processes — and that is only another name for God's — are slow only in seeming. In reality God works with swiftest speed. He hastens to his ends. His methods are all rapid. He hurries his messengers. He sends them with whip and spur. His machinery is all geared for speed. His plans do not loiter. If you seek examples of the quick despatch of business, go to nature. She has no consolations for drones. This creation, far from being one in which slow forces culminate in tardy results, is one where the most rapid thought fails to measure the speed with which the work of God is progressing. It is not true that "the mills of God grind slowly." They grind at lightning speed. Day and night, summer and winter, in darkness and in light, they whirl incessantly upon their smoking shafts, without a jar and without a break, grinding the infinite harvests of life, and whether men wake or whether they sleep, forever hasting with their work.

Why, then, is it that men call nature, and the course of Providence, and the unfolding of life, a slow and tedious process? Why do we count the days of the Lord as a thousand years, and in the face of this inconceivable speed of the divine messengers, cry, "How long, O Lord, how long?" That is the common habit of the unthinking; and I suspect that even the most reflective of us fall to chafing and rebelling when we mark the disparity between our prayers for the world's salvation and the prospects of realizing that blessed event. The trouble is in the different standards of the Divine Workman and

the human spectators. It lies in the vastness of the divine plan and the littleness of the human understanding. It is in the infinite proportions of the work God is doing, and the brevity of the time afforded us, so far, for observing that work. If the work be sufficiently large, the swiftest workman will seem but slow; and the scale of God's work is vast enough to account for all his apparent deliberateness. It is because the movement of these forces is through such vast cycles that they make no more impression upon the sense. The planet seems to creep through the heavens because it swings through such an enormous orbit. The geologic forces seem to linger at their task because it is such a colossal undertaking to make a nebula into a habitable world. You can powder a pebble in an hour. But to grind down mountain ranges and build up continents; to plough the earth with glaciers, and then to melt these solid ice-fields again; to grow the giant trees of the carboniferous period, and pack them down into coal-beds; to breed the successive types of life, from the mollusk to the man — such tasks will involve even the swiftest processes for ages in their work. It is true that Saturn travels twenty-one thousand miles an hour; but then he has to move through an orbit whose mean diameter is sixteen hundred million miles, so it is no wonder that he takes two and a half years to traverse a single sign of the zodiac, and thirty years to accomplish his journey round the sun. Nor is it strange that this seemingly slow, dreary pace made

the ancient astronomers choose Saturn as the symbol of lead. And if we try to figure the distances our solar system is leaving behind it in its breathless race through the realms of sidereal space, they are dwarfed into nothing by the side of the distances scarcely to be computed, which lie before us ere we pass the first starry milestone in our course. The mighty speed is but a snail's pace when we think of the length of the road which lies ahead. We are in a world moved by colossal forces, bounded by infinite spaces, set to run through measureless tracks. It is only according to these standards that its movements seem slow. Every wheel in the machinery of creation is spinning at its swiftest. If the finished product seem to come slowly from the loom, it is because the web is endless.

This is the fact which accounts for our impatience with the deliberateness of God, and the slow unfolding of his purposes. We misconceive the extent of his plans, and fail to comprehend the scale on which his creation is arranged. We lay the little measuring-rule of our short lives against the vast edifices of the Divine Architect, and because that marks so little growth, we lose patience with our Father's work. We cannot see the capstone put upon the structure, and so come to feel that the work is unreasonably protracted. We misjudge heaven, because we do not comprehend the work heaven has undertaken to do. If we dreamed of its vastness, we should never be impatient. If we comprehended the constancy and speed of the progress, we should never doubt the

magnitude of the work. The business of this creation does not end with the growing of gourds and mushrooms, nor the breeding of gnats. It has a wider scope than the ripening of the wheat and the gathering of the fruits year by year. The heavenly purpose covers the formation of worlds, the evolution of life, the unfolding of souls. And that is the work of centuries and of cycles. If there were nothing but coarse work and low aims in the life of the universe, its career might be wound up in a year or a month. For common things only require common periods of time in their completion. But in proportion as ends become complex and aims higher, the periods of time they need for their completion stretch without limits. So that when we rise to the conception of this creation, which pictures it as the field in which a universe of immortal souls is to be perfected in holiness, in joy, and in love, our thought dilates the period which this work will take to countless ages of time.

For it is only when we have included in our thought this principle of the divine economy, that we have begun to get in hand the materials for a proper estimate of our own relations to time and to eternity, — to life here and life hereafter. The speeding days go by us, the years come and vanish, life is suddenly spent, and we look with dismay upon our slender accomplishments. We see generations of men and women brought into this world, detained here but a few short years, and then hurried hence with little or no moral development worthy of the

name. Inevitably the question comes up, "How can we do the much that is demanded of us in the little time we have allowed us?" Is it possible that we are expected to form the final traits of our characters in the limits of a brief mortal life? It is a dark and desperate problem, which comes home to the soul more and more as its time grows certainly shorter in this world, whether its decisive work must necessarily be done here or never, and whether threescore years and ten is an adequate time for the ripening of a human spirit.

It will be enlightening to test that dogma by the principle we have been illustrating. If any man can do it, and not feel the utter inadequacy of the time allotted to the immense task that is set, he certainly can have no just conception of the work involved in the training of a soul to the use of its powers. Neither can he have formed any fair idea of the relation of the period allowed to the work that is to be done. But let him remember that every new step in the rising scale of being shows the Almighty bestowing more and more time upon the completion and the perfecting of the new type. Let him remember that the greatest works of divine might are those which have the longest infancy, the longest period of nurture and of protection, of moulding and of discipline. Then let him remember that in man, in the human soul, we come to the first of the order of existences for which an endless life is in store. Now comes the question: How long is it likely to take this new creation, with the germs of an immortal

career infolded in its being and the possibilities of angelhood dormant in its character, to develop itself? Is this the work of a few years? Can the nature gauged for eternal ages so fix its traits and exhaust its resources as in fifty or sixty years to harden the gristle into the bone, and stamp the features of the spirit with the expression it must wear forever? The settlement of our convictions upon that point ought not to be very hard. But everything will depend upon whether or not we have mastered the fact of God's habit of taking long periods for great works. If we have gathered the significance of these thoughts we have been reviewing, it would seem as if there could be but one answer.

For, in the first place, man is the chief of God's works, as these are encountered in the life of this earth. Humanity crowns the long succession of divine creations. The sentient, conscious soul, rich in affections, that answer the heart of God with filial love; powerful in a will which rules nature with a new sceptre; dowered with the keen and sagacious faculties of thought—this is surely the finest product of creative power yet revealed. And how can he who spends such ages upon the fabric of the lower creatures of his skill toss aside the consummate flower of his wisdom, love, and power after the paltry life of threescore years, and decree that if it fails of promise then, it must be cast into the abyss?

God has taken years which no geologist dares compute, in bringing this world into habitable shape.

He has required innumerable centuries to mould it, to cool it, to drain and dress it, to grow herb and tree upon it, to stock it with fuel and with food, to adjust its climates, and to lay the boundaries of its continents. Swiftly as his agents work, they have had to toil breathlessly since chaos broke up into worlds, to arrange the abode of the human soul. And never in all that time has the All-wise One deemed it necessary to turn impatiently from his work, or because each new cycle found the world still unprepared, give the imperfect beginnings to destruction. God never has been arbitrary, impatient, or summary in getting the earth ready to be the training-place of souls. Can any good reason be given why he should take less pains, be less liberal, grant less time, in the maturing of a soul itself? Will the same God who has taken billions of years to make a place fit for man to begin his immortal career, cut his child off from his birthright of joy, if, in a sixty years' use of that world and its opportunities, he does not show a will bent to righteousness and obedience. If many million years have been spent to make a habitable world, does it seem consistent or just to allow only three-score, or threescore and ten, for putting a soul in order?

How little do men realize the significance of this life, how ill do they conceive the character of their God, when they can believe him capable of such wanton and impatient dealing with his best work! How little, too, do they understand the human soul, when they thus assume that unless it can solve the

problem of mortal existence in a lifetime, it never can; that unless it finds its proper life between the cradle and the grave, it never will! It cannot be that a God who will allow so much time for the making of a world will afford so little for the saving of a soul. Why should time be so lavished on the lesser work and so stinted on the greater? A nature created for eternity cannot develop and fix its characteristics in a few finite years. To draw a line which limits the opportunity of moral choice just where the soul parts from the body is as uncongenial to the purpose and character of God as it would have been if he had arrested the creation when "the evening and the morning were the first day," and said, "As thou art now, thou shalt remain forever." That was not the divine order with the lower world. It will not be with the higher, the realm of immortal spirits. God, indeed, makes haste to his great purposes, but he makes haste more slowly than that.

There is, moreover, a thought here for the comfort of our own hearts, as they grow weary and sick of the hard struggle, the tiresome race of years, whose end sees them so little in advance of where they stood at their beginning. It is heart-sickening to note the slow growth of our own souls. We seem year after year to stand still, ay, even to go backward. And sometimes no doubt we do. There is such a thing as that terrible decline in rectitude, the fall of man. But there are also times in which we know that we have not fallen away in purpose or in prayer, when yet we seem to be at a standstill, or even

worse, in achievement. But that is because we do not take into account two things. First, the immense sweep of the orbit in which our souls are moving. We forget that we are travelling through the eternal ages, and that the magnitude of the scale shrinks the span of our few steps. And, more than that, our ideals soon outstrip the possibility of performance, and the ambitious spirit plans tasks for itself which ages will not see perfected. We soon learn the vastness of the curve along which our eternal progress lies, and the knowledge overwhelms the soul; and when it eagerly wishes itself at some point far in advance of its actual position, the years of course will lag while it creeps on to its desire. We need that admonition of a wise writer, "Have patience with all men, but most of all with thyself." Let us remember equally the scope of the work our souls have undertaken, and the length of time its very nature involves. It is a great and honorable distinction which God has conferred upon us in laying our path along a curve that projects itself infinitely. If we seem slow in our advance, let us remember that this is only the semblance, and not the reality, and so take courage and move on.

There is a curious illusion in astronomic study which shows the ease with which our senses deceive us. It is, of course, a familiar fact that the planets of the solar system move in one direction about the sun. So that if we saw them as they absolutely are, they would seem to make a steady march forward through the clustered stars. But because the ob-

server on the earth moves at a different rate and through a different orbit from the other planets, there are times when all of them *seem* to be reversing their true motion, and moving backward through space. It is a simple trick of optics, and easily explained. But it exactly parallels our own case when we take our stand upon the facts and conditions and characteristics of our mortal and earthly life, whose elements are all perishable, whose seasons and cycles are all brief, and try to judge the motions of our souls, which move in different orbits, gauged to different standards. Of course the soul's life will seem to retrograde, if you look at its growth from the standpoint of a constitution and a body which grow old and die in half a century. We need to correct the error of observation by the sublimer facts of spiritual science. Tried by that test, the soul moves right onward in one eternal march about its divine centre. And we learn anew that we have no right to apply the standards of time or of speed which our material and mortal life supplies, to the functions of a soul that is living to eternity.

“Days come and go
In joy or woe ;
Days go and come in endless sum.
Only the eternal day shall come, but never go;
Only the eternal tide shall never ebb, but flow;
O long eternity, my soul goes forth to thee!”

This same correction needs to be applied to the developments of society, and the growth of our human race. Contrasted with the march of material ad-

vantages, how slow seems our gain in morals, the refinement of manners, the purification of life! How rapidly men improve their lands, subdue the soil, build better dwellings, surround themselves with comfort and luxury! And how slow by comparison seems their gain in self-control, in purity of conscience, in religious life. While we thrive in the lower life we seem to stand still or go backward in the higher. But the difference is in the quality of the work done, the limits of the life and its relations. The material existence moves in quick changes, because its years are so few. The spiritual lingers at its work, because it is arranged for eternity.

Even with this thought we shall be likely to under-rate the actual speed with which moral growth goes on. Measuring all human attempts by what they fail to reach rather than by what they have really done, we fall into the habit of understating the real work of humanity. Much as men do, we think they ought to have done more, and so we are chary of our praise. Take, for instance, the men and women whom Europe sends to us out of her city slums and out of her country bogs, deadened, dwarfed, and depraved by centuries of ignorance and oppression. We take them into the life of this great new world, dress them like ourselves, feed them and house them, and give them votes like men to the manor born; and, when we have put them to school in this new civilization for a year or two, we wonder at their slow progress, and complain because they still savor of the peat-bog and St. Giles. Then we write

them down as inferior races, and say they never were meant to associate with Anglo-Saxons! But think what they have done, and how much they have overcome. This laborer's cottage, with glass in the windows, and a carpet on the best room, and flowers growing over the little porch, is a great advance upon a mud cabin, with one room and a dirt floor, where pigs and 'cattle herd in with the family. These people have made great strides. They are coming on well. Give but a few generations of this discipline of free life and fair opportunity, and you will count their children among your best citizens.

So, too, of the negro and the Indian. Why should we call them hopelessly inferior? Why should we complain at the slow progress they are making? If we count their achievements as we ought, by what they have done for themselves, and not by what they have not yet accomplished, we need feel only joy and satisfaction over their prospects. It is very much to have changed wild savages, such as the slave-trader brought to these shores and the western pioneers found on the plains, into orderly and industrious people, ambitious and devoted to learning better things. But with Hampton Institute and Fisk University to tell us how far the advance guard of these races has reached, who can find any but words of thankfulness and praise for their efforts. They have a long past of error and of wrong to undo. Shall we not grant them time enough for their great work?

These thoughts ought to bring us hope and good

cheer; they should stimulate our faith and our hope in the Lord's providence. The review of our own growth, the survey of the world's life, is not unmingled with fears that the steps of progress do not keep pace with time. But remember how swiftly God is working. Bear in mind that if his footsteps ever seem slow it is because they tread an infinite road. Though he seem to move with leisurely indifference to the hot haste of men, he is really speeding swiftly toward his purposes.

“Wait ! 'tis the key of pleasure,
And to the plan of God,
Oh, tarry thou his leisure,
Thy soul shall bear no load.
Wait ! for the time is hasting
When life shall be made clear,
And all who know heart-wasting
Shall feel that God is near !”

But while we wait let us work! True we have the years of eternity in which to toil, but we have infinite tasks to perform. We have all the time there is, but we have all the work there is too. The moral of these thoughts is not, therefore, “Take your time,” but rather, “Speed your work.” It will never do to leave to-day's work for to-morrow, nor time's work to eternity. To-morrow will bring its own tasks. Eternity will be full of its own affairs. Take heed to the perfect ways of God, who, though to him a thousand years are but as yesterday, nevertheless toils with a constancy and a speed as swift and steady as the flow of time itself.

THE INEVITABLE CONFLICT.

“And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” — *REV. v. 13.*

THIS is one of the ascriptions of universal honor to the Son of God, in which the visions of the Seer of Patmos abound. To his quickened and fore-reaching sight the coming time was destined to place one name above all others, and gather the united praises of the moral creation about one person. This impassioned poem which closes the New Testament with an outburst of magnificent and exultant triumph discloses the end of the age-long struggle between good and evil, the climax of the spiritual toil which has engaged the saints since time began, the fulfilment of the prophecy of the Christ, “I will draw all men unto me.” That is the event in which the whole spiritual creation is to culminate, the overthrow of evil, the removal of the curse of sin, the joyful obedience of men to God, the universal reign of righteousness:

That is the inviting picture which prophecy presents. But if we recall our delighted eyes from this vision of the creation that is to be, we find in the creation that is a very different condition. Here is rebellion, here is evil rampant and defiant, here is the deep-rooted sinfulness of the human heart. Violence, deceit, and lust, social ferment and national feuds, the hateful rivalries of peace, the deadly rapacity of trade, the awful disorders of war, shock the observant eye, and fill the timid with doubts whether the great end can ever be attained, and this warfare subdued to the harmony of a righteous creation. Between the promised consummation and the actual conditions there is a contrast which chills many a Christian heart with utter distrust of the power of God to overcome evil and accomplish the desire of his soul, the deliverance of the moral universe from the bonds of sin. This depression, it need not be said, you and I are not permitted to share. Our faith does not admit a doubt that the Lord will accomplish his will, and save the world. It does not permit us to question that in some way a victory will be secured over the most obstinate souls, and the most self-willed taught obedience. That is a corollary of our creed. And it involves certain deductions, which we too seldom make, of the gravest personal moment. Given the final state of the creation, a condition of reconciliation to God, of righteousness, of moral harmony, and over against that its present disorderly, sinful estrangement, and it follows necessarily that somewhere in the line of

time, between the moment where we stand and the moment when we shall be delivered there must be a point at which each individual soul will accept the divine will and submit to the law of God. The day of repentance is as certain to come as the day of death. It is one of the *inevitables* of life.

I say it is *one* of the inevitables. There are others; and from the various standpoints from which men view life, they are accepted as such. There are some things which you and I *must* experience. No device we can invent will enable us to circumvent them. They bear down upon us as irresistibly as the dusk and the darkness crowd on the heels of the day; as surely as the remorseless dawn blazes into the obscurity of our couches, to chase our slumbers away.

For example, one of the inevitables of life is *to grow old*. That is a matter in which a man has no choice. As long as he stays in this body he is subject to the conditions of an existence in time. He must pass through all the developments which come with the lapse of time. Infancy gives place to youth, youth to manhood, manhood wears away into the limitations of age, and shrivels with the waning of the vigor of its pristine powers. Desire wakens, waxes, and wanes. Knowledge is forced upon the changing mind. Power varies with the years. Every feeling and sentiment suffers from the incessant vicissitudes attendant upon a lifetime. Nobody thinks of the possibility of staying this overflow of the stream of time.

|

"A Mighty Hand, from an exhaustless urn
Pours forth the never-ending flood of years
Among the nations. How the rushing waves
Bear all before them! . . .

There are they who toil,
And they who strive, and they who feast, and they
Who hurry to and fro. The sturdy hind —
Woodman and delver with the spade — and there
The busy artisan beside his bench,
And pallid student with his written roll,
A moment on the mountain billow seen,
The flood sweeps over them, and they are gone."

But it is an expectation inseparable from the knowledge that we must grow old, that *we shall also change* with all our belongings and environment. If we live in this world it is absolutely certain that we change our condition. There is no stability in us. The very definition of life involves the occurrence of changes, continuous, necessary, invariable. Our bodies are the scene of change from the moment they enter this world till they fall in death. The mind changes with its house. We vary in our desires, our knowledge, our aims, our beliefs, from day to day and year to year. There is nothing more fluent, nothing more subject to pressure, alteration, change of structure and of functions, than the human mind, the will, and ~~the~~ affections. The dogma now affirmed as the basis of the new defences of the doctrine of eternal punishment is the most insecure foundation it has ever had. It is argued almost entirely on the assumed fixity of the character in evil. But there is no such thing as fixity of char-

acter. Character is the most flexible of all things. It invariably yields to its environment. And with its surrounding continually pressing upon it, and moulding it toward harmony with divine law, it is the blindness of ignorance to prophesy for it a fixity in discord and evil forever. The one thing we can certainly predict of ourselves is that as time goes on we shall change. Nay, we must phrase that differently. The one undeniable fact about ourselves is, that quite apart from our own will, our prayers, our desires, our struggles even, we shall *be changed*. There is no phase of life which forces us more sharply upon the sense of our own helplessness in the hands of the great powers which move and mould humanity, than this changing aspect of our existence, as we are borne from year to year and mood to mood, from unconscious infancy to brooding old age.

Last of all, the inevitable events which our mortality fixes as sure to come is *the death of this body*. As sure as the fact that we are here to-day, is the fact that we shall *not* be here to-morrow. There are a great many things we do not know about our earthly existence. The one thing every man *does* know about it, is that he must give it up. So that there is no phrase by which we can strengthen our words so stout as that which says that a thing is "as sure as death."

"Life, I know not what thou art,
But know that thou and I must part."

That is a truth which in our blindness or cowardice we seek to put away from ourselves and keep out

of mind. But it is a fact of which every man's daily life reminds him, with a reiterated emphasis from which there is no escape.

Now, to these three inevitables of age, change, and death, the Christian believer adds another, — *the life after death*. We change, we grow old, we die. But the faith of the Christian teaches him that after death he lives again. He has no choice. Man cannot terminate the existence he did not create. He must live on in his conscious identity. He is the same person, with unchanging personality, after the body has resolved into its original dust. Inevitable as age, inevitable as change, inevitable as the body's death, is the continuous life of the soul in other conditions. There is no escape from being and from continuing to be. The walls of our existence are built high around us, and they are effectively barred against any desperate soul that seeks to overpass them. It is a strange and awful thought that we who came into consciousness by no act at all of our own, are by no act able to cut the cord of our continuous personal life, and sink ourselves in annihilation. The great debate of Hamlet with himself might well have been left unsaid. "To be or not to be" is not a debatable question. We are, and we are to be. And nothing can exempt us from the sweeping, the universal dominion of this rule of God's creation. The suicide plays a fool's game. He stakes the awful risks of a soul's honor on the desperate chance of escaping from himself. And that is the one thing of which no man can get clear.

You and yourself are wedded forever. The union is inevitable. There is no divorce.

Age, change, death, immortality. Is there anything else which must be affirmed as the universal experience of mankind? Are there any more of these inevitables, exacting their tribute from all who pass along the highways of life? There is one more. Not, indeed, affirmed in the faith of all Christians, but a necessary sequence of the larger faith. In the course of our increasing age, out of the successive changes of life, this side death or the other, assured by the immortality of the soul, there must come an hour when the will, consciously and of its own accord, submits to the divine. It may be delayed, it may be for a time evaded. It cannot be altogether put off. In some way or another, that, too, is an experience which must befall every living soul. If we have never made that surrender; if we have only made it in part, then we shall certainly have it to do. It is as inevitable as age, as change, as death, as resurrection. The ultimate condition of every moral creature under God's present economy is one of submission to the law of the creation, — obedience, loyalty, service. The only way to that universal destiny of holiness and happiness which awaits mankind is through the submission of the will to the statutes of the Lord. The path to salvation lies through humiliation; and every human heart must sometime tread that way.

Three centuries ago a Spanish adventurer stood upon the topmost peaks of the Sierras of Central

America, and saw before him that sight coveted by so many eager spirits of his time, the great southern sea, or, as we know it, the Pacific Ocean. Far away below him, gleaming like silver in the sun, stretched the waters toward which his steps were bent, — the goal of exploration, the open pathway to India and Cathay. The vision must have been one to fill his soul with joy, profound and uplifting. For this he had climbed the lower hills, for this penetrated the forest tangles, for this struggled over the rugged spurs of the great range, until now, from its very crest, he could see the shores he sought, stretching a glad assuring spectacle under his sight. But before his feet could press those coasts, before he could launch any keel upon those inviting waters, he must descend from the high mountain-tops, must pass again into the valleys, must struggle through the forest jungle, must plunge into the mist and damp of the lowlands. The way to the peaceful sea lay through inevitable toils, denials, hardships. To these he must bend who would pass the portals of this coveted ocean. And so perforce must it be said to every heart that has struggled up those heights of faith from which we see the shores of the great crystal sea, in which creation's evil is destined to be swallowed up. It is a moving vision, which stirs the soul with a mighty joy. He who has once seen it with faith's strong sight, will not forbear to give God thanks for its great assurance of joy to come. But before his feet can press that shore, let him remember that his soul must pass through the valley

of humiliation, his will must traverse the hard path of obedience, his heart go through a long journey of denials and renunciation. To see the distant ocean is not to stand beside it. To behold the glory of the world's salvation is not to share it. The impressive lesson, often slighted or altogether missed in this connection, is that before you and I can partake of the joy of the ransomed creation, we must subjugate our own wills to Heaven. Nay, that very consummation will wait for us, nor be complete till we have given our consent to be led of God. Before our souls can be launched on the glassy sea of perfect peace, they must pass the lowlands of self-surrender to God.

I say this most impressive truth of our faith is often ignored and its force slighted. It has *never* received the practical emphasis it deserves in our personal applications of religious truth. It is not a mere abstract deduction. It is not an inconsequential inference from the great faith in the world's redemption. It is the most weighty and serious fact we have to deal with. It puts a new "inevitable" before every soul. It adds another to those experiences to which we have to submit and for which prepare. It puts a new motive before the soul, a new appeal into the lips that persuade.

For see how it enforces the *relentlessness of God's love*. We hold a false notion of the divine nature if we figure it as lax, as easy, as shifting, or weak. Theology, indeed, has pictured such a deity, under the delusion that it was conceiving a strong being.

But there is no such ideal for our God, none so worthy of respect, none so majestic and at the same time so lovable, as that which shows him absolutely inexorable in his love toward his children. For there is such a thing as the inexorableness of love. There is a love too patient to be tired out, too long-suffering to be exhausted, too wise to be outwitted, too strong to be resisted, too tender to be defied, too intent to be thwarted. Divine love is so strong and so enduring that it can never give up its end, never abandon one of its own offspring. It can punish as well as comfort. It can discipline equally with prosperity or with distress. It never hesitates at any measure, mild or severe, which will compass its principal aims. You cannot escape this love. You cannot so offend it as to alienate it. You can never run away from its pursuing care. It will never give you any peace till you have submitted to its rule. It will not leave you to enjoy your sin. It will not even permit you to sink into the numbness of despair, and take the poor comfort of the inertness, the moral torpor, which come of a settled habit of evil. Even from that vile covert, that last refuge of the demoralized and degenerate spirit, the sharp lash of the eternal love scourges forth the soul, and compels it to make for itself new efforts and incur new pangs. When the edict went forth from heaven that God will have all men to be saved, it was backed by all the tremendous enginery of law, by all the organized forces of creation; by wisdom divine, by power omnipotent, by love inexhaustible. And

that, and no less, is the power you and I undertake to resist when we conspire in our sins against the peace and order of the universe.

It is no valid objection to this thought, to say that even God himself cannot coerce any soul, to which he has given the power of a free will, into obedience and submission. If you mean by that, that God cannot secure the homage of a soul by forcing it into the attitude of an obedience and affection which it does not feel, of course there is no debate, because nobody is contending for anything of the sort. But if you mean that God will not or cannot bring the soul into a disposition it does not wish to feel, or that he cannot alter its bearing toward himself, then you are arguing in the face of fact and experience. The whole labor of God with man is to change the human will into conformity with the divine will. And the world's growth is the attestation of the ample power of God to work the transformation. From the beginning God has been compelling reluctant humanity to restrain, reform, regulate its life, and train it by the life of heaven. Yet nobody has found any fault on the score of coercion. Think of these other inevitable experiences through which God leads us, — the changes which age works, the radical power death has over us, the absolute helplessness of the will in view of the fact of immortality, which forbids it to end its own existence. If God has no unnecessary tenderness on the score of coercion when he leads us through these inevitable ways, need we

suspect him of weakening when he comes to the grand object they all have in view? A man grows old whether he will or no. His surroundings change, and he with them, no matter what his will is. God disengages his soul from his body even when he rebels most keenly. He is doomed to immortality from the beginning. Is it any more offensive to thought to add to these the blessed truth which crowns them all with light and mercy, that he is "fated to be free" from the thrall of sin, that he is "doomed to salvation"?

But if this truth reminds us of the relentlessness of divine love, so, too, it makes us feel how *personal and particular* is this matter of salvation. It is not to be conceived as a general and indefinite event, which is to fall in some way, involving no cost to the sluggish and no sacrifice to the selfish. Our salvation is as personal a matter as age, or change, or death. It comes to every one in the same certain and particular way as each of these other inevitables. I fear we are given to thinking of this great fact of destiny as something which is to befall the race *en masse*, which is to affect it as a whole, never coming home to the individual soul in the pressure of a personal experience. And here, if anywhere, is likely to be the weakness of the faith we hold in the minds of those who receive it without an insight into its logical outcome. If we were to think of salvation as a matter which God will take care of without our help; if we were to feel that it is one of those general events which touches very

lightly on individual life; if we were to count it as God's work, and not ours, then, indeed, the charge might be brought against us that we loosen the bonds of obligation, and open a door of excuse, of indifference, of moral sloth to men's consciences. But by the very nature of our faith we stand committed to a notion utterly at variance with this. Salvation never can come to the race as a whole, till it has come to each man in particular. The way to that millennium, in which we are free from the bondage of corruption, is through the strait and narrow way, in which no two souls may walk abreast, through the portals of personal submission, which you and I and all men must pass separately and alone. Do not think of heaven as a state to be attained just by falling asleep in death, and waking in immortality. Not so does the soul escape its sins. For salvation is not the change from an earthly to a spiritual body; it is the change from a carnal to a heavenly mind. It is not gained by any dependence upon the drift of general forces, but by the effort of each separate will. Such an effort you and I have all to make, if we have not done so already. There is no escape possible, no evasion, no possible refusal. Sooner or later every one of us must make the effort, renounce self and self-seeking, humble pride, and accept the blessed will of God as ours.

"Sooner or later." That is the only part of the matter which lies in our hands. The will of God is fixed that we *must be saved*. But it lies with us to hasten or to delay the hour which puts us in har-

mony with Heaven's will. That factor of the problem is left with us. Just as it rests, in great measure, with all of us whether we die early or live long. The duration of human life is, to some extent, in each man's own hands. Discretion, temperance, purity, sane living, defer the inevitable hour of death. Dissipation, excess, and carelessness hasten its coming. Just so it lies in part with us whether we will come into subjection to the divine will to-day, to-morrow, in ten years, or not until a still more distant date. We may postpone the hour of our peace with God through long years of wretchedness, of hardness of heart, of chastisement and loss. That is for us to say. "Sooner or later" we must submit. The issue is inevitable. But how long we shall be in the process, how severely we shall try the patience of our Father, how heavy the penalty we shall bring upon our own heads, is for us to say. We may turn to God to-day, and life will grow from glory to glory, in a victorious development of our best powers. We may continue in our indifference and our sin, and suffer the pangs of appetites that cannot be appeased, of a rebelliousness which finds its powers of defiance growing steadily less, till sin itself palls on us, and we sink into the stupor of a horrible despair. Either of these courses is open to us. But there is only one end to both. If we travel by that long and tedious and agonizing road away from God, we must retrace it all in the sweat of sorrow at last. Hedged in by the relentless resistance of love, borne steadily down

by the pressure of Heaven's blessed chastisement, we shall be brought at last to just the same point at which we stand to-day, and shall have to make the same decision which here and now would save us all the pain of our disobedience and delay. The end is inevitable. But the way thither lies by either of two roads. Which shall we take? Which do you choose? Can anybody hesitate?

It is one of the marks of a wise man to recognize and to provide for the inevitable. As intelligence grows and duty presses more strenuously upon the heart, we look more and more into the future, and plan wisely, not merely for the life of to-day, but for the life of all our days. More especially do we learn to deport ourselves with judgment and enlightened conscience in view of those things which are sure to come to us. For if anybody tries to fight against the inevitable, he holds himself up to the contempt or the pity of his fellows. How mean and trivial is the man or woman who strives to keep back the feet of age, rub out the furrows of time upon the face, ignore the failing of the sight, the weakening of the limbs, the dimming of the faculties. It is like some puny creature trying to roll back Niagara! And what shall we say of him who, in his human pride or weakness, tries to put off and to ignore the day of his submission to the Lord. Good friend, beware! For if you strive with the inevitable, you will simply add stupidity to your sin.

THE LINE OF LEAST RESISTANCE.

PROV. xiii. 15. — "The way of transgressors is hard."

PROV. iv. 18. — "But the path of the just is as a shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

POUR a cup of water on a sloping surface, and you shall see the little stream go trickling downward, not straightaway, but twisting and turning and zigzagging in its course. It turns aside at every slight impediment, and winds around whatever stands in the way of its flow. It yields to the law of gravitation, and runs down hill. But it does so by following the easiest path, by going around obstacles and not over them, by flowing where there is the least opposition.

This is a simple illustration of a very comprehensive law, of great consequence in the doctrine of evolution. It shows the law of the direction of motion. Any body, set to moving, does the same as the flowing water. It follows the force that pulls the hardest, or goes in a path where it meets with the least resistance. Motion always follows the line of greatest traction, or the line of least resistance, or the resultant of the two.

We have constant examples of this law before our eyes. Every look into the heavens above shows its action on the grandest scale. Every planet and every satellite has a momentum which would, if acting alone, carry it forward in the direction it is at any instant pursuing. Yet at the same time every planet and satellite is drawn by an attractive force toward its primary body, the earth and Mars and Jupiter toward the sun, the moon toward the earth. And the course each body follows is along the line of least resistance lying between these two opposing forces. The curving orbit in which all the planets move, our own annual path about the sun, are always in the line of least resistance.

So, too, with terrestrial changes. The motions of all the elements of this earth are manifestly according to the same law. The land breeze blows all night out over the sea. But when the hot summer day has dawned, and the sun has heated and rarefied the atmosphere over the city, by and by the resistance of the air becomes less on the landward, and the wind veers to the east. It takes the line of least resistance. Hence you owe the cooling draught of the summer afternoon to the same law that swings the earth about the sun. So, too, every body of water on the earth's surface moves in accordance with this law. The great lakes force their way to Niagara, the river carries them to the sea, through the easiest course that can be shaped. And every obstacle merely deflects the stream into a direction in which motion is less difficult. The old saw that

you cannot make water run up hill is simply a homely statement of the universal principle that motion is in the direction of the least resistance.

The law holds a step higher in the creation. It is true of organic life and growth. A thoughtful writer upon scientific subjects has shown a beautiful illustration of it in the development of the plant. The root of your plant grows by insinuating itself cell by cell through the interstices of the soil. It winds and twists whithersoever the impediments it meets in its way determine. The crooked roots of the mature tree are a record of the obstacles they have met, and the easements in the path of their growth. And whenever we find a peculiar family of plants or of animals largely multiplying in any particular place, we know it is because the forces antagonistic to that form of life are less there than elsewhere. In the words of the great expounder of this law, Mr. Spencer, "The preservation of varieties that succeed better than their allies in coping with surrounding conditions, is the continuation of vital movement in those directions where the obstacles to it are most eluded."

Does the principle hold good when we come to human life? A single illustration must hint how the law reaches into our organism and its functions. Whenever any one of us becomes excited, it is a matter of certainty that our emotion will show itself in some habitual gesture. There are certain muscles which have become accustomed to certain contractions in response to certain feelings. And so we

make our familiar gesticulations because habit has worn a channel along that particular muscular tissue, through which the emotion finds its easiest outlet. Thus, when one man doubles his fist to make his gesture, while another saws the air with open hand, each allows his feeling to escape by the readiest route of muscular effort. The emotion starts muscular action, which follows the line of least resistance.

The movements of men in bodies, the social and political changes in the world, bring this law into yet more striking prominence. The populations of the globe are scattered in those directions in which there is the easiest escape from the destructive forces which prey upon life and comfort, and in which the least exertion is required in order to obtain the needful sustenance. Population moves first of all into fertile valleys and beside convenient streams, where food and water most abound. But when these earliest homes of the race become over-crowded, the movement is always toward the next easiest location. And if, in the exodus of a tribe from its crowded fields, it invades those occupied by some weaker clan, the latter, making choice between the spears and swords of the invaders and the hardships of a less hospitable land, and preferring a little harder work to extermination or slavery, still illustrate the law, — they move in the direction in which they will encounter the least resistance. When men choose the pursuits they will follow, they do so with reference to their own aptitudes on the one hand,

and the inducements offered by surrounding conditions, on the other; i.e., they select the work in life which offers them the fewest obstacles. They expend their exertions along the line of the least resistance. And when the demand for labor increases, and wages rise in any given place, workmen come trooping thither, because they think they live more easily on five dollars than on three dollars; they put their labor along the line of the greatest traction, and the line where the fewest hindrances exist to success and comfort. Once again the old law is apparent.

But the application of this law which has the most interest to the Christian believer, is its relation to ethics and the moral life of man. It is not common to trace its manifestations so far as this; yet here we come upon some of its most important functions, and discover its power to unlock some of the mysteries of man's moral experience. A bearing it certainly has on the development and life of conscience, and upon the discipline of Divine Providence which shapes the destiny of our race. It is traceable in the unfolding of the moral sense. It becomes more apparent in the moral relations of the human race, and even permits us to make a forecast of the outcome of the struggles of this sinful humanity.

It is not necessary that we undertake to account for the origin of the moral sense in man, nor to describe the method of its workings. Take it as it stands, wherever we find men and women. It is a fixed and undeniable fact of man's economy. But

mark how it illustrates the law we are unfolding, and be prepared to see how it leads us forward to a more inspiring discovery still. It is entirely possible to describe various ethical processes and experiences of the human race in these very terms which apply to the movement of the solar worlds and the changes in society. Take any moral act, and reduce it to its elemental phases, and see what it gives us. When you are called on to make a moral choice, one of two things is certain. If your moral sense is weak, and the inducement to evil strong, your decision will follow the line of least resistance, and your choice be of evil. The man of weak moral nature finds it easier *for the moment* to do wrong than to do right. The consequences of his act are in the background. The temptation is strong and seductive. The restraints of conduct are feeble and but slightly considered. It is easier to yield, and his resolution is taken in the direction where it meets with the least opposition. But when the moral sense has been cultivated, and the man is firmly habituated to the practice of right, and well-grounded in the motives which persuade to it, the case is reversed. Then the impediments lie in the way towards evil doing. The strongest traction and the least resistance are toward righteousness. Once learn the art of Christian living, and the evil life becomes forever the hardest to live, this path the most thorny to the feet.

It is at this point that we reach the most interesting phase of the law we are unfolding, and one

most momentous to human souls. If it be the law that the activities of mind and soul fall in with the rule which governs the motions of matter and the manifestations of force, what indications are there as to the outcome of these activities? If a weak nature yields to evil, that very act makes the next one still more easy, and the way to sin and ruin is made more smooth with each successive step. The currents of evil choice wear down the channel in which they run deeper and still deeper; and with the progress of the soul in its disobedience, disobedience becomes easier and obedience harder. And according to the law we have traced all the way to man's moral nature, there is but one issue to the process; and that is continuance in sin, deeper depths of perdition forever opening under the falling soul, a doom of transgression which becomes more certain and irretrievable with each new act of sin. If this be the law, and there be no elements in the economy of sin and its sequences which we have not touched, then what escape is there for the soul once entered upon these pernicious practices, which increase the tension of the forces that corrupt, and lessen the obstacles in the way of evil choice? That is not a welcome thought to one who hopes for the redemption of humanity from the thrall of evil. For it seems to seal the doom of a very large proportion of our fellowmen to endless evil choice with all its consequences of woe.

But here we find ourselves enlightened, both in our philosophy and our theology, by a new fact.

We do not trace the real application of our law to the moral life of man until we consider the statement made by our text, "The way of transgressors is hard." That is a truth borne out by every fact of human experience; and it has a most important relation to the law of moral development along the line of least resistance. The resistance offered to the will inclined to evil is not altogether in the protest of the moral sense. Conscience may lift up its warnings in vain. Prudence may be too feeble a motive to withhold the soul from the sin to which it is tempted. But conscience and the love of right are not the only obstacles against which the evil-doer must contend as he pursues his course of degradation and depravity. There are other resistances to be encountered. The downward path is strewn with impediments. Looking into the life of the sinner, and no farther, we find it growing more restless and more miserable. Conscience may not prick so hard; but passion rages more hotly, and torments him with more unbearable gnawings. There is a time in the experience of wrong-doers when their own evil dispositions turn into instruments of torture. Hatred chafes in the impotent desire for revenge that can never be satisfied. Appetite craves more than it can get. Deceit sees its flimsy structures of falsehood fall to the ground. It is in the nature of man's constitution that he shall find it harder to do wrong than it is to do right. And the more wrong he does, the more hardships he encounters. The fever and the misery of his own nature is one of the gravest obstacles

which every man meets when he becomes a breaker of the divine law. The very constitution of the soul rebels against the injuries which are done to it when the commandments of God, written in its own being, are violated.

More than that, "the way of transgressors is hard" because there are always eternal resistances to be met in it, which make it the line of the *greatest* resistance. Sin is not only contrary to the inner nature of him who commits it; it is against the outward nature in the midst of which he lives. It is contrary to man's environment. It is against the nature of things. And he who allies himself with evil is brought into perpetual collisions with all the creation around him. He involves himself in a quarrel with every interest of society, with every institution devised for man's well-being, with the currents of law which sweep through creation from high to low, with the forces which move with resistless gravitation evermore toward righteousness and the will of God. He is against his own body, he is against every atom of matter and every ounce of force. "The stars in their courses fight against Sisera." Every sin arrays itself against the entire universe. It was with a poet's insight into this law of creation that Milton describes the sequence of man's act of disobedience:—

"Earth trembled from her entrails, as again
In pangs; and Nature gave a second groan;
Sky lowered, and, muttering thunder, some sad drops
Wept at completing of the mortal sin."

Doubtless this palpable fact of the moral constitution of nature had much to do with the development of the moral sense and the growth of the various sanctions of right and wrong. Experience teaches men what things are to be avoided and what to be sought. And when it was found what Nature favored and what she frowned upon, what she made easy and what hard, what clashed with the best interests of man and what fostered them, moral enlightenment increased, the standards of right and wrong were formulated, and the bases of those great principles laid down on which the moral life of society has been reared. The moral growth of man has consisted in discovering in what direction lay the line of least resistance in conduct. The progress of mankind has been the application of that knowledge to behavior and to desire. In every other function of the human race, to discover the easiest way is to move in it. And the law covers man's moral activities as well. Progress is along the line of least resistance. Thus mankind grows better because the world is so framed and man himself so constituted that it is easier to do right than to do wrong. Nature and the soul agree when man does right. When he sins they are in irreconcilable conflict.

Here, then, we find the nature of man and the nature of things conspiring to make the way of transgressors hard, and to put resistances in the way of the sinner. And these are the two decisive elements in the soul's development. The evolutionists long ago pointed out that there are two main factors

in all evolution, — the nature of the organism and the nature of the conditions. The case is not different in respect to the spiritual nature. The evolution of a soul depends upon the nature of that soul and the nature of things. It is determined by the world within and the world without. And both, as we have seen, combine to make the way of transgression hard and that of righteousness easy. "The way of transgressors is hard," "But the path of the just is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." That is the inspired way of stating what we have been simply examining as a scientific truth, but it is a statement in which the philosophers concur. "Progress," says Spencer, "is not an accident, but a necessity. Instead of civilization being artificial, it is a part of nature. . . . The modifications mankind have undergone and are still undergoing result from a law underlying the whole organic creation; and, provided the human race continues and the constitution of things remains the same, these modifications must end in completeness." That law is the one which we have been tracing, that motion, activity, growth, take place along the line of least resistance. And that line history, philosophy, and theology all unite in declaring has been drawn straight toward righteousness, salvation, the perfecting of the human race.

We are fully justified in making this inference as to the relation of the divine purpose to the law of the direction of motion. So plain a principle running all through the phases of life admits of but one

conclusion; i.e., that God intended it to be the law of development. And when we find the environment and the organism so framed and fitted to each other that they both tend to the same result, conviction strengthens that God purposed that result. When the organism of the oak and the environment which fosters its growth unite to produce the sturdy king of the field, we consider ourselves justified in concluding that God meant an oak-tree to be the outcome. And when we find a moral nature so constituted that it tends to develop along the line of rectitude, purity, and love, and an environment which offers the least resistance in the direction of righteousness, it is a safe inference that God purposed the development of that nature in the direction of righteousness. When he made the way of transgressors hard, and caused the path of the just to shine brighter and brighter unto the perfect day, God pointed the direction in which our race was to move. He indicated the destiny of man. He forecast the consummation of the work of the ages. He foreshadowed in that one fact the moral order and progress of man,

"One law, one element,
And one far-off divine event
Toward which the whole creation moves."

We are not to be deterred from this conclusion, either, because of the apparent failure of some lives to conform to this law. It is true that in this life many souls seem to contradict its principles. They

appear to go the hardest way and to persist in it. They seem to defy environments, or to have fallen into surroundings which encourage evil. In either case, these instances tend to weaken the evidences of the law we have traced, at least in its application to the moral order. But there is this much to be said in abatement of this objection. Nobody can ever claim the power to prophecy just when the resultant of the conflicting forces in a soul's life will manifest itself in reform, in repentance, in rectitude. The forces which deflect the soul into evil are sometimes the growth of generations, and the effect of the moral environment is slow and cumulative. And because it does not show itself to-day, we have no right to infer that the law is not working. The law may be just about to vindicate itself when we give it up. The sinner may be on the eve of his conversion when you are pronouncing him hardened beyond recovery. The work of grace is hidden beyond the power of computation. But however deeply it may lie concealed, it *works* eternally; and the wind of grace, blowing where it listeth, fills at last the sagging sails, and wafts the soul to heavenly shores. The night before he departed for Damascus, you might have said that Saul of Tarsus was an example of the power of a human soul to resist the divine purpose, and persist in the hardest way. But the morrow would have proved you wrong, and manifested again the resistless force of the grace of God. Moreover, the moral life of the soul does not end with the life of the body, any more than the life of the race ends

with a single generation. Limit your survey of humanity to a single age, and it fails to justify this law which appears beyond cavil in a longer perspective. And so of the individual soul. What this world fails to do shall doubtless be accomplished hereafter. But the many times when we have despaired of its fulfilment in this world, and when it has been vindicated before our eyes, ought to prepare us to believe that even if the curtain of death hides the process, it still goes on, perpetually drawing man into the easier way of righteousness and love.

There are three practical inferences coming out of this thought, which bring it into personal range with your heart and mine. The first is the obvious one of *hope* for sinners. Do not trust the deceitful appearances which fill the mind with despair for the hardened wretch who goes heedlessly on his way of sin, and seems to have escaped the range of this great law of life. He cannot get away from it until he can escape from God. The environment of which we talk when we speak of the laws and forces of the moral world is nothing else than God. It is always and forever the pressure of his spirit upon the hearts of his creatures. It is the stress of his love which makes the way of transgressors hard; and it is the tender beneficence of the same love which makes the path of the just so resplendent. And so it is in the nature of things (which is the nature of God), that the way of sin shall be evermore and everywhere full of impediments and resistances, and the path of right smooth and inviting to the soul of man. While

God is round about us it will never happen that our environment will foster evil. If in any case it appears as if the conditions of life encouraged evil, we must remember that we are most likely viewing only a segment of the whole circle of influence, and only its superficial effects. And while God has the shaping of the decisive elements of destiny, the soul of man and its surroundings, is it consistent with any loving and just thought of Deity to suppose that he will permit his child to escape him? At last, let us firmly believe, it shall be clear to the darkest understanding that the way of transgressors is too hard to be trodden any longer.

Then there comes the thought of *circumspection*. "Ponder the path of thy feet," says the wise man, "and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left. Remove thy foot from evil." You and I have a share in the divine economy. We are able to strengthen with our own hands those safeguards of life which make the way of transgression still harder, and the way of righteousness easier. It lies in human power to help or hinder the divine work. Build in your own heart the barriers of duty and of obedience, of simple purity and stringent rectitude, and you aid the operations of the heavenly law. Tamper with your own or your brother's principles, become his tempter into evil, and you retard for him its wholesome work. There is need that every man shall keep his own walls and fences whole, and help to smooth for himself the highway of righteousness.

And, finally, let him that sinneth remember that this law of life is invariable and remorseless. There is no guile of man, no artfulness, no ingenious prudence, which will enable him to evade the law that makes transgression hard. There is always a thought of *warning*, even in this hopeful and reassuring view of the divine procedure. Beware! Your sin will cost you pain. Be wise! Your rectitude and obedience are the only conditions on which you may obtain a lasting joy. Nothing can remove the obstacles and resistances from the way of the transgressor. He who walks therein, walks to pain and disaster and moral death. You take your happiness in your hand, and put it in the deadliest peril, when you go after the enticing promises of sin. The fruits of transgression are the apples of Sodom. They turn to choking ashes on the lips of him who tastes them. For "the way of transgressors is hard, but the path of the just is as the shining light."

THE ROOT OF ALL RIGHTEOUSNESS.

ROM. xiii. 10. — "Love worketh no ill to his neighbors; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."

It has always been the desire of man to find a motive which should comprehend all righteousness and move to every duty. It was the despair of ancient philosophy that it could supply no adequate principle to reconcile all the activities of virtue, and be a focus where the lines of feeling concentrate to be scattered again in deeds. The philosophers, after the deepest study of the moral nature of man, confessed their inability to discover any spiritual power capable of effecting the regeneration of the morally degraded. And at the same time they failed as signally to settle on any single sentiment, any active principle in the soul, which could be regarded as the root of the true life of humanity, the seed of all right action.

It was reserved for Christianity to do this. It was the necessary work of him who claimed to set up a kingdom for all men and all times to furnish a universal motive, a root of all right living. The recon-

caling principle which men have always sought, and which they have believed could and must be found in the universal religion, is announced in our text, "Love is the fulfilling of the law." That is the terse and original statement of the principle given by Jesus when he summed up the whole moral code in one word: "A new commandment give I unto you, that ye love one another." It is Paul's insight into what the philosophers had missed and the Saviour had revealed. It supplies the missing motive, the reconciling spirit, the inclusive principle. Love to God and love to man is the animus of the regenerated heart, the vital germ in the new man. It is the seed of the new and spiritual life, because it is the essential nature of God; "For God is love," "and whosoever loveth is born of God." This attitude or disposition of man's heart is the normal temper of his redeemed estate. And out of it come all the essential qualities of a righteous life. There is not a virtue in all the catalogue that does not root itself in the soil of love. There is not a brave or holy deed performed in all the list of heroic actions which is not the fruit and issue of love. There is no right relation toward God or man to which the soul is not led and held by the power of love. Nay, more, there is no trait in all the character of our God himself which does not spring naturally and even necessarily from the love which the Scriptures declare is his essential nature.

But let us start in unfolding this truth with a proper conception of what love is. Let us not nar-

row it, and misconceive the meaning of the grandest word yet contributed to language. There is no proper and exact synonym of love in any ancient tongue. Because there never was any true conception of love in the sense in which the gospel gave it to us. And it is not easy for men, even to-day, to comprehend the full meaning of this term. We identify it with amiability and mildness and sentimentality. We confuse it with laxness and indulgence. We measure it by the petty standards of loves that are partial, weak, and blind; that limit their favors to one or two; that are no more than a flush in the blood or a thrill along the nerves. It is more than is implied in any of the words by which we translate it back into the ancient tongues. For it sums up in itself all that the Greek, the Roman, or the Hebrew ever meant by the terms in which they came the nearest to the thought it expresses. When the Jew spoke of love, he meant a kind of "desire" or an "aspiration." And the Greek, with his word, tried to express the intensity of a personal affection. The Latin tongue tainted the idea with an earthiness and carnality which the Christian word eliminates. And from other languages we get the thought of "benevolence" or "charity," which the Christian term adopts as partial definitions of its great and comprehensive phrase. Love as Paul means it, love as it was newly and divinely characterized by the Saviour, is a broader and more comprehensive thing than any of these, — rises higher, runs deeper, sweeps around larger interests, includes nobler ideals. It is

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a feeling which pervades all conduct, governs all motives, sustains every duty, extends to all souls. It is the passion which draws the lover to his bride; but it is more. It is the affection which begets all the sacrifices of the parent for his child; but it is more. It is the reverent attachment of the child to his father and his mother, the pure bond between brother and sister, the golden link of friendship; but it is more. It is the humane prompting which takes an interest in humanity; but it is more. It is the kindliness which prompts to courtesy, the sensitive fairness which insists on perfect equity, the sympathy which reaches after the lost, the mercy which softens the doom of crime; but, again, it is more than these. For it is the strength and the courage which dare to undertake severities which are destined to end in blessings; to be a little hard in order to be very tender; and to go forth with the scourge against offenders, and draw the sword of retribution against the oppressor and his hard-hearted crew. And over and above all these peculiarities, love rises beyond this earth and the humanity it supports, and exalts the soul to heaven's gates, and reaches out for God, and loses itself in the Being whence its holy impulse was derived. That is what Christianity means by love. That is the new passion, born into this world with the new man, even Jesus the Christ. It is the power which led Jesus to Calvary; it is the motive which stirred the heart of God to send him hither to man. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish."

This, then, is what we mean when we talk about love as the crowning trait of the Christian economy. It is no weak and nerveless sentiment. It is no bubbling of the emotions. It is no callow and feeble yearning. It is a strong, vital, dynamic core in a soul, from which is derived the force which animates every virtue, the very centre and root of all righteousness. In a heart animated by this principle, there is a self-sustaining power of right and goodness. Virtue becomes, not a graft upon the soul, but a natural outgrowth from it. There is no need of a law to bind the father who loves his child to be just to the child, because no man would willingly be unjust to one whom he loves. There is no law in favor of honesty, or purity, or peaceable living which is so severe or so exacting as the requirements which a loving heart makes upon itself. The "law of liberty," which Paul urges upon Christians, is none other than this law of love. It is the law which frees us from the bondage to commandments, only because it has put us under a voluntary submission to the law of love. It is the rule of chastened and holy affections from within, replacing the sway of commandments and rules and compulsions from without. It is the tendency of a will, educated in the service of pure sentiments, to direct itself to God's service and well-doing toward humanity.

This is the disposition, the bent and direction, of the heart converted and reconciled to God; the compulsion of the higher nature in us, aroused and stirred, and moving itself back toward God. And

it is a controlling force which, beginning at the core of man's nature, becomes the inspiration finally of all his life and his conduct.

It is a familiar truth that an absorbing passion in the heart comes to dominate and possess the whole life, till the man is at last only an embodiment of the idea for which he is living, — a money-coiner if he is mercenary; a seeker for power if he loves dominion; a voluptuary if pleasure is his god. The cherished propensity moulds, assimilates, directs, everything that comes into the life, so as to minister to its hunger and further its aims. It is at the root of the life, and so decides what the life shall be. And when the passion which thus nestles in the heart is the one comprehensive and regenerative sentiment which is inherited from the world's Saviour; when it is the same mighty passion which sent him about his Father's business; when it is the tender passion which made him the friend of publicans and sinners; when it is the inexorable passion which pierced the callousness of Scribes and Pharisees with transfixing scorn and denunciation; when it is the over-ruling passion which crowned and glorified Calvary with the cross, it is not hard to see how love may be the decisive and characteristic trait, which, down under all other qualities and attributes of the soul, determines its essential nature, transforming all the lower self of man into holiness, and touching all his life with divine grace.

Nor is it hard to see, again, how from this radical force in the soul, there may come all the multiform

phases of moral energy, which we call the virtues, or group collectively under the name of righteousness. It is a false notion of the traits and activities of the moral nature, to treat them as if they were distinct and separate entities, capable of being developed apart, of running in different lines, of independent manifestations. That is not their nature. They are but instances of the transformation of moral force. They illustrate in the physics of the soul the same law which obtains in the energies which can be tested with material demonstration. They are explained as the correlations of spiritual forces.

There is a celebrated experiment in which a daguerreotype plate is ingeniously connected with a galvanometer, a gridiron of silver wires, and a heat-registering helix, and then subjected to the action of light. The energy which was stored up in the sun-beam, when it darted on its long way from the central fires of the sun, is transformed by contact with the sensitive plate, and resolved into several other modes of motion. For with its chemical action upon the plate there is produced electricity in the wires, magnetism in the coil, heat in the helix, and molar motion in the needles of the index. The energy manifested in the solar beam is transformable into all the other modes of motion. And from that one force radiate all these others. That is what we see in the activities of a soul in which the life of love has begun. In that sacred energy we find a force which is transformable into every manifestation of moral life. Whenever the beam of light out of a

loving heart falls upon the points of contact with other lives, it shifts and modifies its forms, and appears in all the various shapes which duty, virtue, righteousness, assume.

Of course we naturally expect and understand that it will beget all the deeds of kindness, consideration, gentleness, mercy, and forgiveness. These we associate easily with the impulse of love, and readily call them its fruits. We see how all those duties which are expected of men and women toward one another in the home, and all the relations which grow out of the domestic life, are prompted and sustained by love. All the gifts which bless and edify men come spontaneously from the suggestions of love. There is no need to number or to name them. Whatever kindness can suggest, and tender solicitude devise, and charity and clemency require, love does for its object. That is the very essence of love. Because love seeks always the good of the life on which it spends itself. "[Love] thinketh no evil," says Paul, "rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth." You have a living illustration of what love will do, when love means tenderness and thoughtful regard for another, in what every true mother does for her baby. The parent's heart is a mirror of the acts and dispositions of love. There is no knowledge, no discipline, no acquirement, won by study or by self-restraint, which can ever be depended upon to suggest the right thing to do for others as the instinct of affection always suggests it.

It is a question whether people realize that there

is no code of manners, and no book of rules on politeness, which can teach one the things to do and the things to leave undone in society with anything like the completeness and the accuracy with which they may be learned from the impulses of a heart made sensitive, sympathetic, and kind by love? Give a man or woman such a nature as this, and he may go into any circle, and mingle with any classes in society, and always leave a good impression, always win a welcome, always please and attract other people. Because courtesy is nothing in the world but love in its society dress. It is the Golden Rule adapted to the drawing-room. There is no infallible way to make a man polite except to drill into the very substance of his being the Sermon on the Mount. Courtesy cannot be learned by rote, but it can be learned by heart. Indeed, that is the only way of getting it perfectly. And when you put a man with a gentle heart, full of loving impulses and sensibilities, face to face with a problem in politeness, he will always prove himself a gentleman. We ought to have a great deal of patience with what we often deem a rude, clumsy, meaningless, and insincere system, the code of etiquette. For even that bundle of conventionalities is an attempt to formulate social customs, so that people will mutually understand one another, and not hurt one another's feelings. As far as it goes, it is one of the manifestations of love.

So of the codes of justice by which men aim to give one another their dues. They are the attempts we make to secure a fair and equitable best for all

the world. And there never will be a perfect code of laws, there never will be a true justice between man and man, according to the unwritten law, until we have learned the meaning of the love which "doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked." Justice seeks to give every man his dues. Could love do more? Justice asks every man to deal fairly with his neighbors. Is not that love's demand? Nay, more. Could any man be a juster judge between two than one who loved them both alike? We all know that the loving man loves mercy. But let us not forget that there can be none so inflexible as he to "deal justly." You can trust that man with any human interest who loves humanity. He will do justly by his brother who loves his brother. Simply because love eternally forbids a man to do any wilful harm to his fellow-man, love insures right dealing between men. It will not overreach. It will not steal. It will offer no insult to purity, no violence to life. It is bound by its very nature to respect all, honor all, jealously guard the rights of all.

But love goes even farther than this. It utters itself in prohibitions. It grows stern in rebuke. It tightens its hand in restraint. The infraction of the law of right always rouses love's indignation. For love seeks the perfection of its object. Whom you love, you long to keep true and right. A truly loving soul promptly and sternly resents and rebukes all shortcomings, errors, and sins. Love is not afraid of discipline. It punishes, not out of irritation, but

out of mercy, to warn, to restrain, and to save. There is no contradiction between severity and love, nor between discipline and love. The love which does not dare to punish is a love which does not know how to be kind. It is soft-hearted to the point of cruelty. It is as foolish as the surgeon who would spoil a cure to save a pang. A true, intelligent, vigorous love always has mercy enough to punish. Blessed are the chastisements of love! They mean deliverance and safety to him who is exercised thereby.

There is one more manifestation of love, its culmination, indeed, and its fullest development, in the act of self-sacrifice. Love not only gives what comes easily. It does the hard things, the hardest possible things. It is ready to offer up time, ease, strength of body and of mind. It delights in going out to other lives, and lavishing its strength, its gifts, its time, in self-forgetful service. It leads men into dreary toil, out over stormy seas, and long leagues of distance, into fiery furnaces of suffering. It carries the tender woman away from the arms of father and mother, and all the protection of childhood's home, into strange cities and untried life, for the sake of her heart's choice. It leads children to forego personal advantages that they may care for some dependent one, some mother or sister. It sustains the household through the denials and sufferings of poverty. It hoards the precious earnings set aside for the boy's education, or puts away the needed food from its own lips to buy the luxury for the in-

valid. That is what we see as the self-sacrifice of love in every-day life, the commonplaces of experience. And sometimes it rises to the levels where all men confess in it the true characteristics of heroism, pressing to the forefront of battle, hurrying to the plague-stricken city, plunging through wild seas for the prize of a human life, facing the scorn of a generation out of simple loyalty to truth. You can depend on nothing less than love to so transmute itself into self-sacrifice. All inferior motives stop short of the line where renunciation begins. When you see your fellow-men enduring their martyrdoms of crucifixion, if you scan their faces you will always see in them the supernatural gleam of a light borrowed from the face that looked down from Calvary!

If, now, we find in the principle of love the root of all the righteousness of man, how can we say any less of its relation to the divine nature. God's righteousness and man's are one in kind. There is not one code in heaven and another on earth. We are made in God's image. And when we live in the spirit of love, we show forth the traits of him who begot us. For God is love; and love is the fulfilling of the law of God's being as well as of ours. The same things are to be said of the manifestations of love in God as in man. All the divine traits and all its activities are but transformations of this one central and root principle, which is the essential nature of God. There are no contradictions in the divine nature. There are no oppositions and unreconcilable contrarieties. There is no changeable-

ness in God's character. It is eternally one and invariable. All its manifestations are the unfolding of love. All its dealings are fraught through and through with tenderness and justice, pity and restraint, blessing and chastening.

There is no question about the love of God when we talk of what men are pleased to call his blessings and his mercies. Whatever strikes us as pleasing, or obviously in keeping with an infinite amiability, we are accustomed to put to the credit of God's love. But when it comes to chastisement, and especially to retribution, our faith weakens, our philosophy fails, and we begin to talk, forsooth, like all the doubting world beside, as if there were something else in God besides love, as if there were a conflicting element in his nature, — judgment clashing with mercy, love pleading against severity.

But why should we create what does not exist? We have seen that justice and love are as effect and cause in human character, and the moral activity of your soul and mine. Is there any call to divorce them, or demand a new psychology of our Father's mind, in whose image we are created? Does God's justice require any more than his love suggests? Is there any contradiction between the Lord's compassionate pity and his inflexible justice?

When justice insists on discipline and retribution, there is no failure of the divine love. The penalties which fall on evil-doers are their greatest blessings. They are the resistance of God to the downward tendency of vice. It may be true that when a man

begins to go down hill, all his earthly neighbors are ready to give him a push. But, true or not, that is not the way with the powers of the heavenly laws. When we try to go down hill, all God's agents unite in trying to hold us back. Retribution waits on every nerve and every sense, using the agency of the acutest suffering to restrain us from waywardness. God seeks the good of every creature, and he takes the most stringent measures to secure it. And the severity of the Lord, so far from being inimical to his love, is one of its indispensable attributes. It would be a feeble love for us, indeed, which smoothed over our delinquencies and winked at our sins. The love of God is often blessing men the most when it spares them the least. He comes in love when he comes in judgment. It is only in an imperfect and human sense that we can ever see any conflict between love and justice, mercy and judgment. As Canon Farrar has said, furnishing the strongest arguments for the faith he shrinks from holding, "Love is not like some white lily hung on a dark expanse of justice; no 'mere flower hung on a pillar cold and dark as stone.' Love is the principle, not the palliative. 'Mercy is the only true justice. Justice is but the severe form of mercy. 'Unto thee, O Lord, belongeth mercy, for thou renderest to every man according to his works.'"

The faith of the human heart has never won a nobler victory than in fighting its way through the contrarieties and seeming dualities of experience to a belief in the unity of the life which underlies the

creation. For the doctrine of God's unity is more than a barren dogma which comes to the relief of a perplexed theological arithmetic. It is a truth which explains divine providence, and lightens the mystery of pain, and casts the ray of hope and promise into the deepest hells. For it means that whatever struggles there may seem to be in the moral universe between the dual powers of good and evil, they are only the illusions of an imperfect knowledge, and they correspond to no reality of the infinite life. For in God we find a perfect unity of motive, affection, and will. His nature can have no collisions with itself. The scheme of salvation represents no strife in the mind of God. It is only the direct and inevitable issue of mercy out of love, moving on through all the stages of justice, retribution, forgiveness, penalty, and purification to its own high ends of redemption. There is only one law of the mind of God. For "love is the fulfilling of the law."

SEVERITY IN LOVE.

ISA. xiii. 9, 13. — "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate: and he shall destroy the sinners thereof out of it. Therefore will I shake the heavens, and the earth shall remove out of her place, in the wrath of the Lord of hosts, and in the day of his fierce anger."

THE text is one of those rugged passages which rise at intervals all through the Old Testament, like so many landmarks of the moral heights to which inspiration had led the Jewish mind. Such passages are like the lofty Sierras that traverse a continent. They run through the Bible as the Rocky Mountains through North America. The Bible puts God and his righteousness and sovereignty uppermost, and out of these facts spring inevitably the idea of his displeasure with sin and his severity in dealing with it. So the Old Testament resounds with the maledictions, the warnings, the denunciations, called forth by the wickedness of Israel, joined with threats and prophecies of retribution fairly startling in their emphasis. The curse against evil-doers resounds through the Hebrew Scriptures, now muttering in undertones, now sharp and terrible, like

thunder in the night. The angel with the flaming sword before the gates of the lost Eden is a type of the retribution taught in the Old Testament. And the stern words of the Saviour in the presence of hardened sinners were awful in their vehemence.

There is no break anywhere. The ancient conception is in no sense superseded. The severity of God's government is nowhere denied. The gospel of love is no contradiction of the earlier truths God discovered to his prophets. It is a statement of still broader truth, which includes the lesser and explains it. When John says, "God is love," he does not contradict the words of David, "Him that loveth violence, his soul hateth." He merely adds a truth to our stock, which shows us the utter incompatibility between good and evil, the righteousness of God and the sinfulness of the human soul. He gathers up the narrow truth into one vastly more comprehensive, and puts even the rigors of God's administration under the control of his love.

For there is no conflict, save in the thought of petty minds, between love and severity. They are by no means contradictory or mutually exclusive terms. On the other hand, the highest love is the severest, the most relentless, in its exactions. Love does not always rise to the beneficent and helpful mood in which it visits its object with a holy wrath for wrong-doing. But that love is the noblest which dares to be severe; and the severity which blossoms from this stem is a blessing. For when we can risk affection in a stern rebuke; when we can run the

THE LEISURE OF GOD.

hazard of misunderstanding and coldness and hate in the interests of those from whom we dread these dispositions; when love carries us to the height of administering any discipline for the sake of its beloved—then it becomes the purest, the wisest, the divinest. “It is no small grief to a good nature,” said Euripides, “to try his friends.” So it is the highest test of a friendship to be called upon to sacrifice it for the good of the friend. The love which dares do this is sublime. The love which does not dare is weak and selfish. And so we must affirm that severity, so far from having in it anything inimical to love, is love’s indispensable attribute. You do not bear your child the highest sort of love when you smooth over his delinquencies, and slacken the reins of discipline. Soft words and caresses and amiable smiles do not make up love’s entire stock. This placid, nerveless, feeble sentiment is a poor parody of true affection. If you love your child as a parent should, you will follow him with discipline, visit his errors with retribution, and teach him early the stringency he will meet in the administration of Heaven. And pray Heaven always to deliver you from an affection that cannot be angered; to spare you from the smile that no delinquency, no treachery, no lie, can teach to frown. But thank Heaven when you find a regard that is sincere enough to criticise. Rejoice in the friendship which follows you with a goad. Be proud of the love which has a scourge for your faults, and indignation and wrath against your sins. A man should fear nothing so much as friends

who are too blind to see his faults, and too feeble to rebuke them.

And here you will distinguish, of course, between severity and harshness, two qualities never to be confounded. Severity is the necessary rigor of discipline; harshness is the manner of hard, unloving natures. Severity implies the employment of all needful means to enforce obedience, while harshness hints at a rough and often cruel employment of these means. We can bear severity without irritation, knowing it to be the prompting of love. But it is impossible to think of harshness as having any such source; and so it always galls the heart. The intent of severity is to develop through discipline. The intent of harshness is to crush and to bruise. Harshness is severe, but unjust. Severity is just, but never harsh. There is a broad distinction between the two terms, which must be kept in mind, especially in our present study.

For in attempting as I shall to illustrate the severity of divine love, I do not wish to be understood as depicting a *harsh* deity. God is always *severe*; for he has made the harmony of the moral creation to depend on obedience and subordination, and these he must secure. But he is never harsh; for he does not punish in cruelty, nor unduly, nor in any malice. The sterner side of God's providence repels us only because we are accustomed to connect severity with unkindness, with lack of love, with harshness. But cleared of the error and superstition which has attached to it, interpreted always by the infinite and

changeless love of the Father, this phase of the divine dealings, solemn and awful though it be, no longer repels nor terrifies. It can only be distasteful to that milk-and-water sentimentalism which deprecates severity, and holds off the hand of retribution, and preaches a gospel of unlimited indulgence and amnesty to wrong-doers. But any fair estimate of human life will lay an honest and unmistakable emphasis upon the severity of God's economy, as one of the elements of his love.

Consider, in the first place, *how exacting God is in his demands upon us*. Things are so adjusted in this universe, that if any part fails to do its appointed work, the whole mechanism is thrown out of gear. Hence man is held so firmly in the grasp of duty. God gives us nothing that we are not fully equal to; but what he has assigned he exacts to the uttermost. When he makes a law, he requires implicit obedience to his terms. Whether it is a law that a moving projectile shall injure what it strikes, or that wine shall intoxicate, or that lightning-strokes will kill, or that falsehood breeds distrust, the violation of its terms brings a warning or a penalty. No man can bribe God with half-service. He remits no claim, waives no demand. When a man attempts to skulk out of his duty, he finds his path hedged in on every hand with troubles. For God has put a line of sentinel laws and forces around his universe, whose business it is to see that nobody shall evade his duty without arrest and punishment. So that while we may chafe against the power which lays

these obligations upon us, we can never run away from it.

Again, remember that in the rigid exactions God makes upon us, *he permits no exemptions*. He makes no exceptions, has no pets, is divinely impartial. His laws are made to cover all cases. They include the wandering comet and the falling sparrow. We can purchase the executives of earthly laws, or frustrate them, and escape their clutches. But who can make himself an outlaw from divine laws? Can you run away from gravitation? Can you prevail on fire not to burn? Can you expect to be released from the duty of being honest, chaste, and temperate? He who found in his own nature the code by which the universe is governed, and who laid its plans with forethought for all ages and conditions, cannot be wheedled into making exceptions of special cases upon special pleas. The march of his law is mighty, irresistible, universal. It provides for the grandest combinations, it descends to the most trifling details. And, having been enacted with this infinite care for the least things, it needs not that it shall be revised or amended for any man's especial favor. There can be no sublimer thought of this creation than that which connects its most comprehensive and far-reaching law with the personal and private good of each separate soul. But the reverse side of that great truth is the personal obligation of every soul to obey every law.

In the light of these great principles, what becomes of the easy morality of our day, which does not deem

it worth while to be troubled over trifles, or to worry over little defections from the right? How do our standards compare with these scrupulous tests of the Most High? He requires the consecration of all our powers and all our acts to his service; and we put him off with a few beggarly works, some poor fragment of our lives, grudgingly taken off from selfish use. He bids us fashion our lives after the nature he has given us in Jesus Christ, and we substitute the character of some sharp financier, some intriguing politician, some coarse voluptuary. God says, "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?" And we say life is not worth living, without riches and luxury and the praise of men. He calls on us to abhor that which is evil; and we play with it, dandle it, live on amicable terms with it, till we lose our sense of its enormity, and come to think that God himself is more lenient toward it than strait-laced moralists allow. Our nineteenth-century world is full of this loose and degenerate philosophy, which denies the severer standards, and thinks there is no particular harm in anything. And nothing is more certain than that it honeycombs society with a moral dry rot, which weakens every sacred institution, and eats away the foundations of home, of church, of state. Our weak excuses for infractions of duty, our hardening self-indulgences, our morbid leniency toward wrong-doers, our every-day pardoning of impenitent criminals, our compromises with felony, our tolerance of falsehood and knavery in men we trust with public places and responsibilities, our

specious excuses for lying and for lust, — all this paltering with duty in the face of God's stern, uncompromising requirement, is a defiance of the changeless laws of the moral creation. God makes no conditions with us which are not just and loving. But when he makes his terms, he holds us severely to their fulfilment. And to expect him to be satisfied with heedless, lawless, thoughtless lives, and to excuse us from the penalties our own failings justify, is to ask him to forget his own nature, and repeal his own everlasting statutes.

If God is severe in his requirements, so is he in his *disciplines*. He who asks much of his children sets severe tasks for them, that they may be trained to do his will. God teaches us by trials. And no teaching compares with his in strict severity. He counts no pressure too hard, no work too onerous, when the spirit's good is to be sought. His agents are no respecters of persons. The world's progress is gained through blood and through tears. It has cost this marching race of ours measureless sufferings to reach its present place, and learn what it knows of powers and of laws. God turns man into a world, bristling with difficulties and hardships, and requires him to work his own way to knowledge, to strength, and to virtue. He goads us to effort with sharp necessity, and blocks the road with barriers which tax all our little strength. Thorny and rugged is the way which leads to enlightenment and to holiness. And yet man's heart is made to be content with nothing short of that which the hardship of disci-

pline begets. He must labor, he must struggle. He must rise, though difficulties environ him from the start. No man can penetrate this mystery which ordains severity in discipline as the condition of success. We only know that that way comes the clearest purity, that that way comes the brightest knowledge. Everywhere the highest spiritual experiences are born of adversity. Milton wrote the "Paradise Lost" out of a heart overwhelmed with distress and trial. Dante's "Divine Comedy" is the unburdening of a soul heavy with sorrows of private trouble and public calamity. The prophets of Israel saw the vision of the blessed future through the hot tears that filled their eyes for their country's transgressions. It is a universal law. Sickness, death, tragedies worse than death, reverses more crushing than the loss of friends, all pangs of the heart and rebuffs of the will, are used to train the soul of man to the highest moods of spiritual existence. As Goethe says:—

"Who never ate with tears his bread,
Who never through the anxious hours
Sat weeping on his lonely bed,
He knows you not, ye heavenly powers."

The prophet's words can never be gainsaid. Our God is a refiner's fire. Whom he would purify he passes through the flame!

But let us pass to consider another phase of the divine severity. We have seen the great principles

on which God administers his laws, his exact requirements, the rigor with which he maintains his statutes, and insists upon their observance. And now, as a necessary sequence of these demands, it must follow that God will be severe in his *retributions*. If perfect harmony in the creation be the divine aim, we may expect the most stringent measures to secure it. In order to warn men of the necessity of observing his laws, he may be expected to attach adequate penalties to the violation of them. And so retribution is the invariable consequence of the infraction of the divine law. It is the great deterrent from sin. As has been well said by another, "Crime and punishment grow out of one stem." That solemn fact is a part of the world's common knowledge. We forget it, we ignore it, we invent ways of circumventing it. But you cannot suppress a great fact of life, and human eyes will never be quite shut against the reality of retribution.

I know these are times when it is the fashion to use soft phrases when we talk about the consequences of sin. The plain emphasis of the outspoken Hebrew does not fit the shrinking lips of our time. For ears accustomed only to the mildest truths of Christianity, well diluted with worldly complacency, recoil from this truth with which we are dealing, except in a form so abstract as to be practically useless. There are few of us who can read without wincing that terrific chapter which sets before us the calamities of which Moses warned his people as the consequences of sin. And yet not one line is drawn too heavily. Those

words are fearful in their intensity. Nothing in the poetry or oratory of the world approaches the sublimity of those denunciations. Yet they are only a feeble picture of what came to pass in Israel's life. Says Dean Milman, "Nothing except the real horrors of the Jewish history, the miseries of their sieges, the cruelty, the contempt, the oppression, the persecutions, which for ages this scattered and despised and detested nation have endured, can approach the tremendous malediction which warned them against the violation of their law." But no man can know the laws of life, none understand the principles on which he himself is judged before Heaven's throne, who does not look with open-eyed courage at the facts about retribution.

The first great characteristic in the divine judgments is their strict *adjustment* to the gravity of offences. The justice of the divine severity is always seen in this, that retribution is always proportionate to the sin. Human punishment is most at fault in its failure to measure itself fairly to the desert of the offender. Men often suffer, under our imperfect law, sentences quite out of proportion to their crimes. The deliberate murderer gets off with some paltry punishment. The man who sinned in the heat of passion, or under aggravated provocation, incurs the heaviest penalty the law allows. It is the confessed weakness of all finite codes and tribunals that they cannot do exact justice. But there is no such defect in the courts of heaven. Not only is every sin punished, but it is punished justly. The

soul transgressing against feeble light receives one sentence; another going wrong in the face of clear knowledge suffers more intensely. When conscience is weak in warning, it is equally weak in retribution. The degrees of penalty are as fine, as nicely graduated, as infinite in number, as the varieties of sin. The forms of depravity in man, from the inadvertent fault of the simple-hearted to the brutal wickedness of the persistently bad, innumerable and complex as they are, surprising alike in their variety and their originality, have all and each a corresponding penalty. The wicked heart never finds God unprepared. For every sin has in it the germ of its own punishment. It was a divine philosophy which led Dante to paint sinners in torment with punishments resembling the sins which incurred them. The severity of love always links the sin and its consequence together, so that the sufferer, while he groans in his anguish, must fain say, "It is my just desert."

That is a crude and bungling theory of punishment which assigns all criminal spirits to the same hell, to serve out the same endless sentence for offences which vary as infinitely as the characters of men. Think of condemning the man of honest purpose, who has fallen into sins of impulse, to the same retributive experiences as a Tiberius or a Borgia. Nay, the recompense of sin takes as many forms as the mutable thing it follows. It begins in the unrest and rebuke of conscience; it grows into the ceaseless surge of passions which will not be stilled; it rises into the torment of a diseased and remorse-stricken heart;

it culminates in a fierce rage, burning unassuaged till repentance brings relief. The love of God works with a severity which is progressive, variable, and cumulative. God renders literally "to every man according to his works."

Another fact to be noted in connection with retribution is its *complexity*. A sin is never simple in its results. The sins of the body affect the mind; the sins of mind and heart work outward into the flesh. So that physical sins involve mental suffering, and inward sins condemn the body to punishment. The entrance of sin into a human organism involves it in the most complicated derangements. A man's sins follow him everywhere and torment him always. They stamp themselves on his features. They lurk in his words. They weaken his step. They bring trouble to his friendships. They interfere with his social relations. They clog his business. They prostrate his ambitions, and they overturn his whole life. No one can set a limit to the stern retributions with which God follows sin. There is no telling where they will end. Like poisons entering the body, they penetrate the whole system. Their action is the same in communities. A wrong principle in government, an injustice or a public sin, is certain to bring on a retribution which involves the entire life of the community. The disasters which befel Israel are no more than may be predicted of any nation which falls away from righteousness. America to-day, with her intemperance, her greed, her political hypocrisy, is as liable to pen-

alty, and as surely getting it too, as any nation of the elder days!

Once more, the severities of divine love, falling on us in retribution, are *inevitable*. Nowhere do these severities assert themselves more uncompromisingly than in the unswerving rigor with which they follow up misdemeanors and sins. We may delay their action, we sometimes may prolong the period of our immunity by shrewd evasions; but the storm bursts at last. The crack of doom startles the quiet air, and we are smitten down. The lie you had forgotten comes back to your door. The lusts you had fostered in secret break loose and follow you out under the sun. The malignant word spoken in the ear is proclaimed from the housetop. The laws by which God's decrees are enforced are incorruptible servants. You cannot throw them from the track, nor bury them up, nor resist them. Swiftly or slowly, silently or in thunder tones, they work their will, and proclaim judgment on our souls. The man who sins throws himself across the eternal march of divine power, which turns from its path no more than a glacier from its bed. To him who defies it, there is no alternative but to be crushed.

Finally, remember that God's retributions are *relentless*. They never cease their work till it is completely done. They never turn aside till they have accomplished God's purposes. No form of fate that the imagination of man has ever personified is so inexorable as the will of God. It will never go back, or turn aside, or let go. It would seem abso-

lutely pitiless, if it were not a loving will working for the highest good of every creature. For our God is without variableness or shadow of turning. His fiat has gone forth that every soul must suffer for its sins, and that decree is irrevocable.

I know of no theology which bears such a warning to sinful men as that which by the gospel we preach and believe. For it carries the tidings that God will have all men to be saved. So that he who has sunk into abject inertness, and would rather suffer all the dull pain of endless remorse than rise up and go to the Father, is roused from his apathy by the message that he cannot rest in this hell whither he has gone down. The divine retribution will give him no respite; he *must* move before it. It will not leave him till it has brought him through the gates of repentance. It will never forsake him till it has put him inside the heavenly city.

This, then, is the hidden meaning we spell out of the mysterious inscription written all over nature and life. The severity of Providence is the severity of love. God is exacting that he may save. He is severe that he may be kind. He blights only that he may the more richly bless. He is indeed severe. He uses no dainty touch with us. He lays down no easy path for our feet. But back of those frowning peaks which rise before us from the moment we first begin our clamberings toward heaven, the sunshine of God's love is bright and warm. It illumines these forbidding crags, and surrounds their awful heights with rosy hues. Bleak as they are, the way around

them leads to sunnier, happier life. But let no man expect to walk thither on greensward and roses. The way to heaven is over thorns and rocks and slippery ledges. Yet, though it seems a hard way, it is nevertheless God's way. Though long, it leads to rest and heaven; though it bristles with dangers, they are all the sworn allies of the eternal goodness of God.

"Then welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids, nor sit, nor stand, but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, but hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang;
Dare, never grudge the throe!"

THE LAW OF RESERVE.

HEB. xi. 39, 40. — "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise; God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect."

THERE is perhaps no passage in Scripture which more explicitly states the Law of Reserve which runs through the creation than this text of ours. There are utterances not a few which declare the progressive unfolding of the Divine Purpose, utterances which point the thought into the past with all its evidences of God's successive steps, utterances which point the thought into the future, in assurance of greater good and greater glory in store. "God who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son," says the writer of this same epistle; and in that sentence the whole past becomes luminous with a heavenly purpose gradually wrought out. "It doth not yet appear," says the apostle, "what we shall be: but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him;" and in these words the future is set

ablaze with the splendors of a divine life, unfolding for the soul. And in the words of our text, past and present are bound together with a strong link of relation in the purpose of God — a relation which makes the latter days exceed the former in dignity and in importance, and which points out the law by which God withholds the better things till the last, making good the deficits of one age by the fulness of the next, and so leading life forward from good to better and to best.

This is the universal law of Providence. Whatever is given, there is more in reserve. Back of the abundance bestowed, there is a greater in store. That which is revealed is but the shadow of what is to come. The present is always imperfect without the future, as the past was, lacking the present. Something must be withheld from Abraham which shall be granted to David, and that which Isaiah sees in prophecy only, is the living reality of Peter's life and Paul's. God's resources are infinite, and man is made the recipient of his fulness only according to his slow ability to receive. He is led through God's fields of beauty, wealth, and blessing, step by step; and little by little are their richness and glory unfolded before his eyes. This universe is too great a wonder to be flashed all at once upon his vision. Life is too profound an experience to be poured hastily into his weak heart. The Divine Spirit is too subtle and too pervasive to be hurriedly revealed. And so all the processes of God imply this very infinitude of his resources and of his riches. Knowl-

edge comes slowly. Righteousness grows through the longest years. Ages elapse in the maturing of the world. From the confusion and wild whirl of chaos, to the orderly arrangements of human society, lies the long stretch of æons which no man can number. Hence the condition is inevitable that God must fit the gift to the hand that takes it, the light to the eyes that see. He must keep back the inheritance till the heir is of age. The preparation of the physical world, the education of the human race, involves, in the very nature of the case, the withholding of the finer forces and resources until the beings have come who can use them, the minds that can comprehend them. The thought which this law suggests is significant and very necessary to a right understanding of this life of ours. There is a divine Law of Reserve in the administration of the resources of God. Our Maker is forever withholding. Yet he withholds to-day only that he may give to-morrow. He bestows as fast as we are capable of receiving. After all that he has given, there is boundless store remaining. And so the future promises revelations richer than the past has conferred; the ages that lie before will witness the same bestowments which have made us rich. As fast as we are ready or have need, the abundance of the heavenly treasures will be disclosed, and all God's glory forever made to pass before our eyes.

I do not think it is necessary to demonstrate this law. It is too well understood and too widely accepted. It is almost everybody's creed to-day.

For this is the thought which underlies that trite remark of our day, and which reveals the struggling efforts of men to state their sense of this movement of God's providence, "I believe in progression." Taken by itself that is a somewhat meaningless sentence. But taken in the light of to-day's problems, and to-day's thought, and to-day's aspirations, it is a declaration of substantially those things uttered in the text, and set forth in this great law of the creation. It is the belief which has taken hold of this generation, in development, in evolution, in the progress of providence, in all that these great facts imply, including this law of reserve. A faith so common need not be demonstrated. Let us take it for granted, and then let us do with it as the mathematician does with the propositions which come logically out of any theorem. Let us deduce the corollaries of this law. Let us investigate their moral and spiritual bearing.

I. The first corollary is, *that God in every age has been bestowing himself and his abundance upon his creation.* "These all having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise," says the text. No, they failed of the fulness of a larger day; but they "obtained," nevertheless. They did not get the whole, but they got much. They did not hear the fuller, clearer accents of the Holy Voice. For these would have fallen upon ears too gross to perceive their thrilling harmonies. But God spoke to them, and they heard him. Because the divine will withholds and keeps in reserve some of the

riches of its store, we are not to charge it either with partiality or with neglect. It is the tendency of scepticism to do just this, and to try to criminate God, and convict his providence of unfair dealing, because the man of the stone age did not have the electric light, and because Abraham did not receive the promises of the gospel. "Here is an injustice," says the critic and the doubter. "This creation you pretend to interpret is irreconcilable with a uniform equity and love. Some receive more than others. Your Deity does not treat his creatures alike. He has richer gifts for some generations than he bestows upon others. What had Moses and the prophets done that they should not have all the fulness of Christ? What is Israel that it receives the message withheld from Egypt, or India, or Cathay?" The answer is found in two words, suggested out of this text.

The first is, that God's children all receive *something*, and that according to their capacity for using. God has never withheld himself from any of his creatures. His abundance has something for each and for all. Whatever a given soul, whatever a particular race, is ready to receive, God bestows. There is a correspondence between the gift and him who receives it. Electricity in the hands of a Hottentot would be no boon. The savage could not use it. The Sermon on the Mount was a spiritual utterance beyond the grasp of Abraham. He could not, in his day, with all his consciousness of God, have understood or lived out its divine ethics. Abraham rejoiced in a certain vision and knowledge of God; and if, in

deed, it were not the highest, it was higher than his own conceptions, and it raised him up in spirit. The savage uses the stone hatchet or the flint-headed arrow, which represents his highest inventive genius, proud of his own skill, and pluming himself on his superiority to his less ingenious brother.

"To each according to his several ability," is the law by which divine providence distributes its bounty. And in a progressive scheme, an economy which proceeds from small to great, and from the imperfect to the perfect, it is obvious that the earlier individuals will come short of their successors, both in capacity and in inheritance.

In view of these palpable facts, this evident law of the creation, it is hard to see the grounds for the intense aversion which some who claim to be accurate students and thinkers exhibit toward the idea that God can have chosen any race or any individuals through whom to communicate himself to men.

1. The same argument which is held to constitute an objection to the idea of revelation by a chosen race would challenge the divine goodness because the nineteenth century is more enlightened than the sixteenth.

2. It would challenge divine goodness because Michael Angelo is more gifted than the village sign-painter.

3. It is the argument of Mill and Ingersoll over again against the goodness of God because of the lack of uniformity in human life.

4. It fails to note the doctrine that we are all

"members one of another; that all gifts are for all humanity; that all are for each, and each is for all."

5. It is a narrow argument, conceived in total blindness to the universal law of selection.

In the second place, there is a significant prophecy in those words, "that they without us should not be made perfect." To one who believes at once in the solidarity of the race and its immortality, there is a thrilling suggestion in those words. They hint at the unity of our race and its life; how the past is knit into the present, and the present back into the past. And they lead the thought onward, behind the veil, in a query which leans strongly to faith, whether in that unseen life, they who came before us in this world, they who for our sakes and that we might have light, endured the darkness and the gloom of less favored times, are not somehow partakers in our progress, and we in some way paying back the debt under which they have laid us. At all events, this much may be said: they who were the earliest through with the discipline of earth and its lessons were the first to pass on to the higher lessons of the unseen world. And under the swifter tutelage of that finer condition, they have had ages the start of us in the efforts to understand the depths of the wisdom of the knowledge and glory of God. Thus, it may be, the balance will be struck and the compensation made.

II. Another corollary of this law is the fact, *that it involves the notion of forethought or Providence.* The mind receives one of its strongest impulses to a

faith in a divine plan in the creation, from the discovery of the reservations of which the world's life is so full, and of their relation to times and seasons in the development of that life. The case of the atheist or the materialist never looks so weak as when we are confronting the evidences of mind and purpose in the unfolding of life. It might not be an irresistible evidence of a divine provision to see the warm mould producing a change in the seed which it infolds, whereby the seed bursts and sends up its tender stalk; but when it is seen that this stalk is provided with appendages which are perfectly adjusted to the external air from which they proceed to imbibe a part of the nourishment of the new plant; when it appears that the new organism is so formed that it will grow on what it gets from the ground beneath and from the air above; when this growth is found to proceed according to a definite plan; when it is seen that that plan tends to the production of a fruit and a seed, in which are new possibilities of similar plants; when all these facts group themselves into an array of evidence that there has been an anticipation and a preparation within the seed of that plant for all its later life,—the theory which assigns this foresight and this preparation to blind forces of matter, and to mechanical correspondences, looks totally inadequate. The seed bursting in the ground is not so passing strange. But the pushing up of those tiny cotyledons; their perfect preparation to find food in the air, for which they seem to have been held in reserve; the ripening

of the fruit, delayed until the maturity of the plant, — these put a new face on the problem, and make it an intellectual effort not to believe in a foreseeing purpose in the plant's life. It is this holding in reserve some of the characteristic features of the plant's life until that life has reached certain stages which impresses us with the intelligence which has gone before, and prepared for each step of its development.

So of the more conspicuous manifestations of this coincidence of the internal and the external, this reservation of the resources of life till they are needed. It comes home to us with a new force when we see a continent opened to the race just at the juncture when its fields are most needed by a growing people. It is not such a marvel that America should have been discovered ; but that its discovery should have come when it did ; that its gates should have been opened to the Old World just when the forces of civilization needed a new territory in which to develop their best results ; that it should have been held in reserve until it could be given, a virgin world, to be the home of the highest institutions in politics and in religion which human society had yet evolved — this patient withholding of the priceless gift until its value should be of the highest service to mankind is a startling and a convincing evidence that Intelligence has shaped and Wisdom ordained the progress of the ages.

The mind which is at all susceptible to this thought must perceive that it carries conviction still farther. It has a bearing upon the favorite doctrine of evolution, and it prescribes the only condition on which

that hypothesis can maintain itself. This universe, with all its high and glorious elements, the mind and spirit of man, the intricate organism of the human race, may, indeed, have been evolved from the primeval nebula which glowed and stirred when the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the deep. It may be conceded that creation has been only a process of unfolding, and that all the elements of the kosmos were involved in the substance from which it sprung. But it must be remembered that you can get out of a thing no more than there is in it. It makes no difference whether that thing be a bird's egg or a world, the same law holds. We get no more out of the egg than creative power has first stored up there; neither do we out of the primitive nebula, the great world-egg. If man, with all his transcendent powers, — his reason, capable of tracking the subtlest relations, his conscience, seat of moral authority, his affections, roots of all the mightiest passions that dignify life, — if all these were unfolded from a molten mass that whirled and flamed in space, then there was more in that nebula than clashing atoms! There was Intelligence in that quivering mass! There was Passion in that flame! That cloud was quick with the sense of Right and Wrong! For thought and love and conscience are not properties of matter. And if nothing has been added to the sum-total of substances and energies with which the universe was started, then the equivalent of the spirit and the mind of man lay in the bosom of that luminous mist — it was shimmering mind or it was conscious matter!

But somehow these later unfoldings were first unfolded there. If you concede that, there is no difficulty about your theory of evolution. If you do not somehow provide for this necessity, your doctrine must go lame. If you will have it that the mind of Shakespeare existed potentially in the fires of the sun, then you must find there something besides the atoms of Shakespeare's body; you must find the elements of his consciousness, the susceptibilities of his mind. In short, you must find spirit there, as well as matter. For there is a divine essence in the nature of man. There is that which allies him to the Infinite, the Absolute Life. The very delay in the appearance of these features, their late arrival on the scene, only the more forcibly impress us with the conviction that they must have been involved in the plan from the outset, a sort of goal toward which development has moved, as they are the point from which a new evolution starts. The Power which has held these developments in check through the ages must somehow have forecast their appearance at last, and involved them potentially in the very life-substance of the creation.

III. If now we can feel the living sense of the Life that beats forth from the heart of the Creator into the heart of his creation from the beginning, and accept as wise and divine his method of gradual fulfilment and the long reserves his counsels deem best, we shall not be so ready to fall in with the pessimism of the age, and judge all the creation by the past and the present. The law which holds from the beginning until now was evidently enacted

out of the eternal nature of things. It is for all time, and eternity itself. The same law, therefore, which has withheld the fulfilment of so many of the cravings of humanity, so many of the plans of God, until the "fulness of the times," is still in force, and still holds back the realization of our dreams and desires until the fitting moment comes. How little of God's glory has been revealed! How small a portion of his exhaustless treasure has been bestowed! How meagre a sketch of his holy purpose has been disclosed! Now, when we see how many of the mysteries of man's experience in the past become clear and intelligible in the light of the present, are we not willing to trust the future to explain what still seems dark and insoluble? If God has held back his comforting revelations from the eyes of former generations, ought we to expect that he has revealed the whole of his wisdom to us? And is nothing to be trusted out to the days that are to come in this life and that better one to which it leads? How many a trial of childhood shines as a blessing in the light of these maturer years! How many a pang of the elder world has proved the birth-pain of a better day to man! They who bore the pain could not indeed see its meaning. Once in a while there was one like Hugh Latimer, when he cried from his martyr's stake to his friend and fellow-victim, "Play the man, Master Ridley; and we shall this day light a candle such as by God's grace in England shall never be put out." But for the most part the martyr dies without the vision of the

triumph of his cause. The heroes of Shiloh and Chattanooga and the Wilderness got no glimpse of the peace their blood has brought in these better days. The apostles had no premonitions of the glorious outcome of their travail in the church throughout the world. All these must forego the sight of the blessed future, must never set foot in the promised land. They die under a cloud. But the future lights that cloud with the glorious hues of divinest meaning. Can we not trust the goodness of him who holds in store for our souls the same revelation, the same disclosures of good, the same interpretations of love and blessing? Do not quarrel with God because he withholds his messages until your spirit and mine are prepared to understand them. Wait till his wisdom decides that the time has come, and then — then you shall know as you cannot now. Remember how this principle of reserved goodness runs through all God's dealings. The blessing is "laid up" until our hearts are ripe for it. His comfort will be disclosed in the very bosom of the grief. The loss will prove the fore-runner of a gain. The bitter cup will be a tonic to the soul's best life.

"Green pastures are before me
Which yet I have not seen,
Bright skies will soon be o'er me,
Where the dark clouds have been.
My hope I cannot measure,
My path to life is free,
My Saviour has my treasure,
And he will walk with me."

Finally, it is quite in keeping with this law of reserve that there shall be only the most vague suggestions in the present of the glory that is to be revealed. It has been the law from the beginning that there is the scantiest possible material in the things that are seen, out of which to construct even a semblance and shadow of things that are to appear. Man's prophetic faculty is always exercised under the heaviest conditions. He can only express his thoughts of what is to come in speech which rests on the narrow knowledge of to-day. And his imagination, fettered to the same conditions, is crippled in the same way. We cannot figure to ourselves the glory of the coming time, because we have not the materials in hand out of which to make the pictures. Your ancestors of the prehistoric days, the cave-dwellers or the Ar-yan herdsmen, could not even have conceived of the wonders of a vestibuled railway train. If one of them had seen in vision a telephone or a seaman's sextant, he could not have described it to any other man, nor have understood it himself. These devices would have come to him like objects from another world.

Why, then, should we wonder that we cannot see nor know the details of the life that death will make real to us? How could we expect to see its celestial landscape, hear the sweet voices of its angelic hosts, or be the witnesses of the daily life of those who have passed the bourn? We have not the faculties. We have not the data of knowledge. If the marvels of the nineteenth century A.D. would have been

indescribable to the mind of a man of the nineteenth century B.C., how can we expect the things of the world of spirit to be made plain or palpable to the mind still incorporate in this flesh. The very suggestion of such a thing carries with it the presumption of ignorance and of error. The blind man must await the revelation of color until his eyes are opened. The deaf man can never feel the ecstasy of sweet sound till his ears are unstopped. So you and I must wait for the revelation of the unseen world until we have finer senses and a different knowledge. "For eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." That which is above sense can never be made manifest to the senses. And the dreariest record of delusion in all this world is the tale of those who have ages been beating at the gates of the other country for messages and signs of that which cannot be translated into the language of earth.

Do not repine at this truth, and call it a hard condition of life. It is the one under which men have always lived. It is God's good will and pleasure to reserve the disclosure of his good things, revealing them from time to time, as we grow fit for their bestowment. And when you and I have done with the realities of this life, and the veil drops from our eyes in the next, then will be the great day of disclosure, when, like babes entering upon the wonders of this world, we pass to the new surroundings which have been kept in store for us from the foundation of the world.

For what lies beyond, for the unrevealed life of the immortal, we have no speech, we have no dreams! Sometimes an awful glory seems to shine in our eyes, and a great thrill lifts our hearts when the thought comes that "when He shall appear we shall be like Him." But all down the future lies a track of growing light, and our feet shall pass that way, and our eyes shall see it.

"Not the light that leaves us darker ;
Not the gleams that come and go ;
Not the mirth whose end is madness ;
Not the joy whose end is woe ;
Not the notes that die at sunset ;
Not the fashion of a day ;
But the everlasting beauty,
And the endless melody ;
 Heir of Glory,
That shall be for you and me."

YESTERDAY, TO-DAY, AND FOREVER.

HEB. xiii. 8. — "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever."

THERE are some relationships in life which never can be duplicated; some persons who will keep forever their own places in human hearts. With all the changes of life, a man will hold the same love for his mother that he bore her when she led him by the hand, or drew him to her bosom. That one place is forever sacred to that one soul. And if he be a true son, and she a loving mother, there will never be any other who can fill her place in his affection or his memory. In the larger life of the world, too, there will be and there must be some natures whose character or work places them in relations to mankind which time cannot sunder or seriously change. Great bards may yet appear to enchain men's ears, yet none will ever crowd old Homer from his place in human honor. As long as men delight in deeds of valor, as long as the story-teller wields his spell over the intellect, will the children of men repeat to each other the measures of the "blind old man of Scio's rocky isle."

Emerson has truly said of Plato that he is "a chief structure of human wit," "the corner-stone of schools," "the fountain-head of literatures." These are minds which will always hold the place they have made for themselves in the ages. And this is the meaning of the writer of our text, when he affirms the eternal pre-eminence of Jesus Christ. His was a nature with unchanging relations to humanity. The place he holds, the work he has done for men, is an eternal one.

But of course the reverse of this truth is equally valid. There are certain relations which we sustain to other men and to the world which do not change. There is a self within us which in one sense does not change; there is an identity we never lose. The head may whiten and the form bend in the infirmity of age; the heart may sadden and lose its wonted courage or hope, and still it is the same person who walks and thinks and feels, with constant and unchanging relations to time and space and events as they pass. The most solemn fact of personal life is the unchanging identity we carry. We are ourselves, the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever. We are eternally the same personalities. Wherever we are, in time or in space, I am I, and you are you! That is one of the perpetual facts of our existence, not to be changed by any mutation of our circumstances nor any development of our natures. Let the matter of our bodies change as it will; let the dispositions, habits, and thoughts of our minds change as they may and do, we are the same persons we were

in the beginning — we shall be as long as we exist.

It is of the soul, in these its perpetual relations to time, that I wish to speak. For since we are in one way the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever, then yesterday, and to-day, and forever—the past, the present, and the future—are always yielding us certain elements of life, and are all of them at once entering into our lives. Yesterday lives in to-day; so does to-morrow. The past reaches forward to to-day; the future already has its hand upon us. No present is broadly understood, no to-day is seen in its truest and most significant light, which is not viewed in its relations to both past and future. Both yesterday and to-morrow enter into the life of to-day; the one by memory, the other by anticipation. But there is a deeper and more intimate connection than this. We feel the results of yesterday's life in every pulse of to-day's. And the prospect of what to-morrow will bring, or demand, has a controlling influence in the plans of to-day. A being with a perpetual, continuous life never lets go either the past or the future. Of this truth let me speak more fully, and show how yesterday, and to-day, and forever mingle as one in our lives.

I. *Yesterday.* And, in the first place, let us reflect that no yesterday ever quite leaves us. The fact that it has gone by us on the stream of time does not bear it out of our lives. It is not a thing gone. It lives, not only in the memory which sets it before us, but in the character it has produced,

the experiences it has contributed, the weakness or strength it has wrought into the nature. Yesterday's work is never undone. Indeed, it is the one thing which cannot be undone! To-day may do other work, may mend yesterday's mistakes, or mar its solid successes. It can never undo what has been done. That must always stand in the long line of causes which flows down to to-day, and makes it what it is. When Daniel Webster stood in his place to maintain the good name of Massachusetts against the sneers of her vilifiers, he turned his glance backward over the history of that noble old commonwealth, and, thrilling with the sense of the glory which her departed heroes and their brave deeds had made imperishable, exclaimed in a passionate outburst, "The past, at least, is secure!" That is one of the mercies of God in the blessings he sends. Once ours they are always ours. The happy past we may be mourning to-day as lost is still our own. It lives in feelings refined and sweetened; it lives in the power of character; it lives in the wisdom trained by its experience. And in this sense it is a fact that the past is always present, and yesterday is only a part of to-day. As another has said: "All the past is shut up within us, and is a perpetual present." We see this in the lives of men and women who have outlived some circle of noble and brilliant friends, choice spirits that once made this world radiant, and now set the heart aching for that heaven whither they have risen. The lonesome spirit cries out, "It is better to have lived with

those than to be alive with others." But that very cry is testimony to the fact that the past, so bewailed, is more real than any present. It lives in memory, in quickened intellect, in affections which know no change.

Especially is this illustrated by the guilt and the remorse which past sins lay upon the soul. The perpetual presence of the past is one of the chief ingredients in the penalty of evil deeds. Sinful men would be glad to repeal the statute of God which enacts the indissoluble connection between yesterday's misdeeds and to-day's misery. But alas! The links which make the chain of conscious identity, rivet the consequences of sin to its commission, and make it as impossible for a man to escape yesterday's transgression as to run away from his own shadow. Sin and suffering go hand in hand, and yesterday's crime is the skeleton that haunts to-day's banquet. It is yesterday's dram that burns to-day in the drunkard's brain, and tortures him with the demons of delirium. It is yesterday's cowardly blow that chills the murderer's heart with the freezing horror of a dead man's face. It was a hideous yesterday that haunted the youth of whom an ancient writer tells, who, being reproached for cruelly wringing the necks of some young birds, betrayed his crime by exclaiming, "It was their own fault; why did they keep twittering at me, 'Paricide! Paricide!'" There is no Lethe of sleep, of sweet dreams, of absorbing care, of mirth or brilliant scenery, that can drown the memory and the work of yesterday:—

"In a bleak land and desolate,
Beyond the earth somewhere,
Went wandering through death's dark gate
A soul into the air.

And still, as on and on it fled,
A wild, waste region through,
Behind there fell the steady tread
Of one that did pursue.

At last it paused and looked aback;
And then it was aware
A hideous wretch stood in its track,
Deformed and cowering there.

'And who art thou,' he shrieked with fright,
'That dost my steps pursue ?
Go hide thy shapeless form from sight,
Nor thus pollute my view !'

The foul shape answered him : 'Alway
Along thy path I flee ;
I'm thine own actions ; night and day
Still must I follow thee.'"

II. *To-day*. The fact of personal identity, then, and the necessity in the nature of things that the soul must carry its past always with it, reveals the connection which yesterday keeps up with to-day. No day is a thing by itself. We cannot put a wall of sleep between our souls and yesterday, and rise to-day unencumbered by yesterday's mistake, or shorn of its advantages. For all our days enter into each new day. You cannot begin to live to-day as if you had never lived before. Some light or some

shadow descends to you, the legacy of your past. And thus to-day takes a larger dignity. It becomes a more important thing when we regard it as a sum of all our yesterdays. No man so highly values the present as he who sees how it is the accumulated past. It is the common verdict of men that to put a right value on wealth, it is necessary that its possessor should have put some labor into its accumulation. If he inherits it, if he grasps it through some lucky turn of fortune, he does not know how much it is worth. But if he has made his money himself, every dollar of his wealth represents some past effort of brain or of body. His life is coined into the dollars of his capital; and so his wealth stands for his work, and has a larger value than it could for one to whom it suggested no past, no accumulation of efforts and denials, no sum of thoughts and purposes and resolves. So he alone can have a just appreciation of to-day who has marked its connection with all yesterdays. It is not a separate unit from an aggregate of parts; it is just a convenient measure of a portion of onflowing time, from which it is inseparable. And as the perpetual abode of the soul, — for our life is always lived to-day, — it is entitled to the highest appreciation. And yet how few of us rate to-day at its proper value! How few see it in the dignity it deserves: —

“Shines the past age, the next with hope is seen,
To-day shrinks poorly off, unmarked between;
Future or past no richer secret folds,
Oh, friendless present, than thy bosom holds!”

A true intelligence, then, will rate to-day as the all-important time, because it is the soul's living time. It is never safe, it is never right to undervalue one's present. Because it is less happy than you remember, less generous than you hope for, to-day is not the less important or valuable in your life. One thing is certain, all your life concentrates here; and here, if ever, must you live. To-day is the time for action, and proffers opportunities that never will be exactly duplicated. That potent will of yours, much as it can do, is never able to affect either past or future things. Its sphere is circumscribed to the ever-present now. To-day is its only season for activity. And so the whole aim of being should be to turn all the realized results of yesterday, and all the hopes for to-morrow, into the channels of to-day. Let all the resources of life be lavished on the present. Make it good as it can be made. Treat it as so much material, so much opportunity placed at your disposal to put under the pressure of your will, to receive the impress of your character.

For although we have seen that to-day can never escape from yesterday, we must not forget that to-day may always modify and change the results of yesterday's work. Yesterday furnishes the material of to-day's life. It is for to-day to use that material. And so the burden of sin which the bitter yesterday has handed down to us may be rolled off from the soul to-day. The past, indeed, can never be changed; but its results can. Yesterday's work cannot be undone. But to-day's may repair, may alter, may ut-

terly transform it. For, in the providence of God, the close of one opportunity is the beginning of another. When yesterday ends, to-day begins. And to-day is the eternally open field of opportunity. No character is so fixed in the habits of yesterday that to-day may not break their thrall. No sin of yesterday is so enormous that to-day's repentance may not alleviate the throes of remorse, and roll its heavy weight from the toiling pilgrim's back. No prosperity is so secure that to-day's mistake or neglect may not overturn it. No sorrow of the past is so deep that the resolute faith and hope that rise with this morning's sun may not dispel it. It is a just and considerate compensation by which a loving God offsets the power that yesterday wields over to-day, by the equal power which to-day has over yesterday. No morning, indeed, ever dawns whose skies are not painted by the colors that yesterday mixed. But, contrariwise, no storm-clouds ever settled so heavily out of yesterday's perturbed atmosphere, that the clear currents sweeping down out of the higher strata of to-day's life could not blow it across the eastern slopes of the sea to make way for sunshine and for peace.

So the rising of the sun of each to-day is an invitation to every mortal mind to come forward with its new schemes and its fresh business. It has a cheering yet commanding summons to every heart. "Come forth," it says to the men of the axe and the plough, "come forth and clear new acres, and lay the furrow across new fields. Come forth, ye busy

builders, and plant new homes, and rear new roofs, and span new rivers, and lay your girdling tracks through the wilderness lands of the earth. Awake, ye schemers for the social good, and plan new routes for man's advancement, new agitations for reform, new researches in the arts and processes of social growth. Here are fresh books to read; here pages in experience yet unturned; here treasured facts awaiting study; here enterprises only staying for your touch to change them from possibilities to achievements. Linger no more, with backward look, thinking of yesterday. Waste not one moment yearning for to-morrow's dawn,—

“Trust no future, howe'er pleasant;
Let the dead past bury its dead!
Act — act in the living present,
Heart within, and God o'erhead!”

Ah, friends, it is a noble challenge that each to-day makes to our wills! No night ever yet fell in which man could feel that the gates of opportunity were shut upon him. No morning ever broke without flinging out its cheering signal for new undertakings. It is a kindling thought, inciting to the liveliest endeavors, that to-day may be the date of a crisis in life, of some success, some discovery, some task accomplished, some consolation found. How eagerly Columbus watched and waited for the dawn of that new day which was to disclose the low-lying coasts of a new world! How invitingly its hours opened, when unknown wonders were to be

unfolded, and a fresh contribution made to the world's life! So every new to-day breaks upon the seeker after truth. He knows that any day may bring him to new continents of knowledge. He looks on every sunrise as Napoleon on the dawn that ushered in the triumph of Austerlitz. If a man love his work, he will hail each to-day as it throws open the portals of his chosen labor. Michael Angelo, true, zealous artist that he was, loved nothing so much as to be about his work. And so eager was he to turn all hours to account, that he would sometimes forestall the dawn, and rise to work by candlelight. To-day was to him a gift too precious to be curtailed of a moment. So will it be to every one who understands the dignity, the value, of to-day. He will count his hours as a miser his dollars. He will reckon each to-day a dividend from the treasury of time, itself a value to be spent on worthy commodities.

And if a man be living in this spirit, doing to-day's work with might and main, turning every energy into the moulding of the material the past has yielded, into advantages and occasions of triumph over trial, he will not weakly lament any past, nor chafe impatiently for any future. There is a disposition which makes a man secure against all the darts of trouble. It is a true, submissive, industrious life to-day! It is the disposition which colors the day, after all; and a cheerful nature will make a better time out of a dismal day than a morose heart out of a sunny one. If you use to-day aright, it will give you blessings.

As Roman Horace sung, in words that Dryden has translated: —

“ Happy the man, and happy he alone,
He who can call to-day his own;
He who, secure within, can say,
‘To-morrow, do thy worst, for I have lived to-day!’ ”

III. *Forever.* But there is yet another side to our relations to time. To-morrow and all its successors, even forever, live in our lives to-day. To-day looks forward as well as backward for the elements of its life. No man, therefore, has a just view of to-day, except as the forerunner of days to come. It was Prince Metternich who said: “The present day has no value for me, except as the eve of to-morrow. It is always with to-morrow that my spirit wrestles.” The great diplomat uttered a striking truth. No life to-day is worth anything if it be merely for to-day and naught else. We shape to-day according to what we believe to-morrow will be. And the intensity and firmness of a man’s belief in to-morrow is the measure of the influence it will have on to-day. If we believed in no future, the present would wear a very different face. For, as Coleridge says, “The spirits of great events stride on before the events, and in to-day already walks to-morrow.”

It is a poor life, narrow and mean in its aims, in its temper, in its works, which looks no farther than sunset. For there can be no large plans of life, no broad disposition of one’s powers, no stimulating ambitions, unless we look beyond to-day, and include

many to-morrows in our anticipations. Hope and expectation are the springs of the soul's best activities. And we cannot live the best life that to-day is capable of yielding unless we live as though we looked for a certain morrow to carry forward our enterprises. Strike out all hope of continuance from human life, convince men that they die like gnats, with the set of the sun, and you take away the strongest incentives to effort. We can bear to feel that change will harass, and decay perpetually remodel all things. But to believe that through all vicissitude nothing remains intact, nothing survives to repay our pains, nothing to perpetuate our toilsome successes, is to make life not worth the living. Living from hand to mouth is not living at all. It is barely existing. Until a man begins to live for to-morrow, he is not a man, but a child. And he has not begun to realize his true spiritual nature till he has learned to live for eternity.

But what do we mean by living for to-morrow? How are we to keep up this long-range effort and forecasting of thought? Must we put aside the joys of to-day in favor of a to-morrow that forever recedes before us? Shall we ignore the light that shines to-day while we wait for to-morrow's dawn, which in turn shall lose its charm as soon as it is come? The proportions of life are not to be enlarged in any such way as this. To-day is not dignified, certainly, by despising it. We should never accomplish much if we forever postponed realization. No, we cannot solve the mystery of spiritual living by making eter-

nity a future thing. It is done by feeling that eternity has begun. That "forever" toward which our hearts are yearning, that eternal life into which we wrongly suppose that death will usher us, dates from to-day. Present time is a part of it. To-day is a segment of forever. Eternity is not time to come, but only an expression for the endlessness of time that now is — time of which yesterday and to-day and to-morrow are factors. We are living in eternity as truly as we ever shall be. Just as each present moment is a part of to-day, so each present to-day is a part of forever, a unit in eternity. Did you ever think how that future to which you and I are looking so wistfully will be, when it arrives, just another to-day? A poet has said:—

" No mortal ever dreams
That the scant isthmus he encamps upon
Between two oceans, one, the stormy, passed,
And one, the peaceful, yet to venture on,
Has been that future whereto prophets yearned
For the fulfilment of earth's cheated hopes;
Shall be that past which nerveless poets mourn
As the lost opportunity of song."

LOWELL : *The Cathedral.*

And it is equally hard for men to feel that when the farthest to-morrow comes which the imagination can conceive, it will dawn upon us as to-day has dawned, will proffer its opportunities as to-day proffers them, will call upon our strength and affections, will set us fresh tasks. The same laws are in force to-day as will be then. The same mighty powers

are working to their ends, the same eternal principles as have been, and shall be to endless ages. It is a fallacy to talk of "passing into eternity," as though death were a door, and we went through it into existence in some other kind of duration. We are in eternity now. And we can begin living for eternity by simply schooling ourselves to think of life, the life we are now living, as a perpetual life, which is going on forever.

When a man thinks that he is likely to live long in the place he has chosen for his home, he spares no pains to beautify it, and make a comfortable, a convenient, a well-appointed abode. So long as he thought he was only to live there a little while, he did not care to spend either money or labor upon a place whose comforts he would enjoy but a brief season. Men do not care to put much thought and care into the bivouac of a night. But when once the feeling of permanence is given to a home, and the understanding that it is to be the shelter of many years, the disposition grows to fill it with all that can beautify and bless. And so, too, when we understand that this life in which we are living is the life in which we are to live forever; that no vicissitude breaks the chain of identity which fastens day unto day; that no convulsion of internal nature will separate the soul from itself — then, I say, we have a motive for putting the house of life in order, for opening its windows toward the sun, for cleaning out its basement and rubbish-rooms, for making it warm and light and wholesome. "Know ye not,"

said Paul, "that ye are [now, to-day] the temple of God?" "Beloved, now are we the sons of God." "God hath given unto us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son, hath the life; he that hath not the Son, hath not the life." Brethren, is it not time that our houses of life, the abodes of selfhood we must forever inhabit, were swept and purified, and adorned with righteousness?

There is a false doctrine of life with which unwise teachers try to spur up laggards and restrain wrongdoers, by forebodings based on the uncertainty of life. "Be wise, be good, be penitent, to-day. To-morrow's sun may never rise!" It is a complete inversion of the truth it is meant to teach, thus to play upon our knowledge of the uncertainty of physical life. We ought rather to warn men to repentance and to godly living because of the certainty of life. "To-morrow's sun may never rise!" Oh, fatal error! To-morrow's sun is sure to rise. Somewhere and somehow it will certainly wake you with its remorseless rays. It is as inevitable as death itself. It will find you out and blaze upon you, a loving revelation of your righteousness and fidelity, a stern disclosure of your weakness and your sin. That dreadful "forever" is the perpetual menace of wicked souls. For it is the sentence which binds them to their own corrupt and festering selves. It threatens no lash from without, but only the continuity of that consciousness which is the most irksome, yea, the most tormenting agent of retribution. And no man can escape its thrall or break its hostile force until he is

a penitent before God, returned in humble love to his Father's house, doing his duty to his God. But when he looks at his life from a lowly and a purified heart, "forever" becomes the pledge of joy, the assurance of peace, a sacred title to a mansion of blessedness. It is a dreadful forever no more, but a forever bright with hopes and fulfilments eternally renewed.

Finally, let us cherish the thought, that the whole round of life is compassed in these three words of our text, "yesterday, to-day, and forever." And it is a very simple thing to live aright, if we once get the relations and the proportions of our days adjusted truly. The past is never lost, and the future is always present. Eternity infolds us, and we are living under its laws. To-day was once that to-morrow toward which we yearned; it will soon be yesterday. But remember there is one day that never passes. That is to-day;—for it is always "to-day." We live and act only in the present. And the time to make both past and future do their work for life is in the eternal now. There is blessing in the air. It is ours, here and now. God help us, as the endless round goes on, to seize the benediction each to-day holds out, and treasure it in grateful hearts.

"Forenoon and afternoon and night ! Forenoon
And afternoon and night ! Forenoon and—
What ? The empty song repeats itself ? No more ?
Yea, that is life. Make this forenoon sublime,
This afternoon a psalm, this night a prayer,
And time is conquered, and thy crown is won !"

THE VICTORY OF THE MEEK.

MATT. v. 5. — "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth."

MEEKNESS is not a quality which stands high in the estimation of this world. It belongs to the class of virtues which are praised in theory, but mistrusted in practice. It might almost be described as fitted only for Sunday and pulpit use; on all other days, and in all other places, ignored and scouted as impracticable. That is the popular estimate of meekness. And it must be added that in the popular view meekness is apt to be identified with weakness. It is accounted a purely negative trait, a compensating merit in those who are denied the more vigorous qualities. But one of the last qualities which parents or teachers, or (I had almost said) ministers either, set about to develop in the young is meekness; because it is deemed too fine and too visionary for daily use.

But is meekness identical with weakness? Is it this negative, pale, and debilitated trait which nobody covets and few acquire? Does it seem as if the Saviour would dignify to a place so high among the

virtues a quality which, if it be what many conceive, springs from deficient force, and lack of personal power? If it be so, then we have in the Saviour's words a saying hard indeed to believe. For it is the doctrine of our times, taught in every new phrase of the current philosophies, that the strongest only survive, and the weakest go to the wall. So that, if this be the law, it is hard to understand how the meek, if they be indeed the weak, are coming into possession as heirs of the earth. If strength rules at length, and if meekness be weakness, how in the development of social organization is the earth ever to fall into the hands of the meek? Our insight into the beatitude, and our acceptance of the truth it contains, must begin at just this point. We seek it first of all in the analysis of the word meekness.

The essential quality of meekness negatives at once those conceptions of it which connect it with lack of personal force. Meekness is a type of the highest sort of moral strength. For meekness means self-control and self-abnegation. Your meek man is he who has such perfect mastery of himself that he can hold himself in subjection to a principle, can put his own pride, desire, feeling, one side, and patiently endure every hardship to the inner self for the sake of his work and his purpose of righteousness. And that is the very highest sort of strength. It does not mean passivity, but power; the power hardest in this world to acquire — the power to hold self in hand, and control the world within in the interests of some great truth. Meekness makes itself humble, and so is able

to submit to injury and provocations. But it bears them without resentments, not because it is too weak to resist, nor too pusillanimous to feel the hurt, but because in comparison with the principle for which it endures these pains, they are not deemed worthy of a thought. And so meekness cannot be set down as a deficiency of strength, but as one form of its greatest development.

You will see by this definition that a weak man cannot be a meek man. He lacks the first elements of meekness. For he cannot be meek unless he is at once sensible of his trials, and able to control himself quietly under their stress. If he is too obtuse to feel the stings of contempt, of injustice, or of cruelty; if he is too abject to feel the rising flush of indignation under wrong; if he has no pride to battle, no self-love to curb, no grasping selfishness to labor with — then he may be pliable and inoffensive and mild and harmless. But he will not be meek. No man bears a cross who does not realize that it is a cross. And insensibility, indifference, timidity, are not the soil in which true meekness grows. There is no meekness about a coward. There is none in a sycophant, nor a truckler. There is nothing meek about the man who endures injustice or submits to a hurt because he is afraid to protest against them. That is cowardice, pure and simple, with its roots in weakness and unworthy fears. So, then, a meek man must be capable of strong passions, and capable at the same time of controlling them.

That is equivalent to saying that the strength of

the meek is in the first place the strength of *self-control*. And self-control is the quality which perhaps most of all distinguishes the civilized man from the uncivilized, the Christian from the natural man. Untutored manhood, before it has been through the discipline of the years, is incapable of self-government. It is impulsive, violent, oppressive. It continually oversteps its own rights to invade those of others. It is unable to limit itself to the lines of its own proper domain. And the whole process of social development has been to transform exuberant and intractable man, whose nature unfits him to live side by side with his fellows, into a self-restrained and well-governed creature, who can live beside other men without infringing upon their rights. The work is far from completion. The tyrannies, aggressions, injustices, of the world are by no means eradicated. But something has been done; and the uniform direction of progress has been toward self-control, and the limitation of individual life by consideration for the lives of others.

When Henry Stanley, after months of exile in the heart of the Dark Continent, with none but savages for his companions, and none but savage manners before his eyes, first met with white men again on the banks of the Congo River, the thing which most impressed him in his white brethren was what seemed to him their singular calmness, their self-possession, their firm and even poise. They were only ordinary whites; but their bearing was in such marked contrast with the excitability, the childish garrulousness

and frantic gesticulation of his black comrades, that they seemed almost like beings from another world. And so, indeed, they were. They came from a world in which ages of discipline had been lavished to educate just such impulsive beings as those blacks into the self-governed citizens of civilization. The great explorer was receiving in one single impression the effect of the long centuries of progress in teaching man self-control. The power which had reduced the shouts of the savage to the modulated tones of the white man, which had modified his uncouth gesticulations to simple yet forcible gestures, and tamed his paroxysms of excitement, rage, or fear to an equable temper and reserved demeanor, was the accumulated self-control of ages. It was one manifestation of the strength which makes the modern man the master of the savage, — the power of self-control.

The power which so impressed Mr. Stanley in its outward manifestations on the side of behavior pushes up to a prominent place in the economy of the moral life, and especially in the genesis of the Christian virtues. The same power which enables a man to control his voice and make simple gestures is at the root of his ability to keep his temper and refrain from revenge. It is the rule of the higher nature over the lower. It is the ascendancy of moral force. This it is which has taught man to restrain his hand from his neighbor's chattel and from his neighbor's life. This same control has released the bondsman from his slavery. It has conceded the rights on which free society subsists, and which un-

derlie the greatest states of modern times. It was an enlarged self-control on the part of kings, and a sense of its necessity to the well-being of society, which gained the Magna Charta from the tyrannical John. It was a magnificent instance of its still more potential sway when Washington put aside the temptation to use his well-earned power to usurp a nation's new-found liberties. It was self-control, again, as it affects societies and peoples, which permitted the peaceful arbitration of grievances between this nation and the mother country. It is upon this same growing principle, which sets a limit to the passions, and governs them in a more complete dominion with each new century, that we base our hopes that the nations of Europe will one day adjust their difficulties without resort to the awful, the needless, the savage alternative of war. It becomes strong men to be not violent, not overbearing, not tyrannous, but meek. And there is an ideal of national intercourse toward which the enlightened and Christian leaders of every land are straining with eager desire, which can rest on no other basis than this one of a social, yes, a political, meekness, whose chief trait is enlightened self-control.

But more than this, a further analysis of meekness reveals the fact that it rests upon the power which begets and is begotten by *self-abnegation*. And self-abnegation never yet occurred in a weak nature. It is a characteristic of none but the strongest souls. To magnify self; to grasp all and give nothing; to think of self first; to work for self always — these are

characteristics of man in his earliest stages, as babe and child in individual life, as savage in the life of the race. It is only with time and with the growth of his moral nature that he learns how to give up, to sacrifice, to forget self in the good of some person or some great cause. And when he rises to an act of pure self-sacrifice, he scales the heights of noblest being, and does the greatest thing humanity can possibly compass. For in the experiences which lead up to self-sacrifice, man discovers his own greatest worth to himself and to his fellows ; and he puts the stamp of that high value upon his soul when he gives himself without reserve in the acts of sacrifice, and writes himself down as nothing in comparison with the cause for which he goes forth. Abraham Lincoln, standing on the hills of Gettysburg to dedicate the soldiers' cemetery, said in words which will live forever, "The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here." But what immortalized the men who on that memorable field yielded up their lives for the land was their entire surrender of self to the cause and the nation for which they stood in their places and welcomed peril, suffering, wounds, or death. And to be standing there in the very front and edge of the battle's dangers ; to have relinquished home ; to have parted from wife, children, friends ; to have given a quit-claim to life, if the fate of war should foreclose — that was not the act of weaklings ! It took the strength of manhood's best life to do it ! To unclasp the fingers from the life-treasures to which they cling with the closest and

the fondest hold, to count these all as naught when weighed in the balance against the country's welfare, the freeman's rights, the appeal of truth, the good of suffering men, — this is the glory of self-abnegation ; and it is the crowning test of strength. When a man's soul will bear that strain without breaking, there is no questioning his inner strength. He may never be canonized, but he is fit to be. For he has followed the shining form of Him who in this same spirit toiled up the green slopes of Calvary to give His life a ransom for many.

In its two leading characteristics, then, meekness turns out to be not weakness, but strength ; not the negative mildness of the craven or the milksop, but the strong self-restraint of the most vigorous natures, the self-abnegation of the most stout-hearted. This is the true picture of meekness. He who draws it with the tame lineaments, the shambling gait, the apologetic bearing of servility and meanness, mistakes his subject. That is not meekness. For meekness always implies something held in subjection, something kept under the curb. And here there never was anything worth curbing. The beauty of meekness lies in the fact that it is the docility, the quiescence, of a soul thoroughly submissive to the divine will, and utterly emptied of the weakening and the distracting elements of selfishness. But it is the humility of the strong, and not the servility of the feeble.

Moreover, we shall not be entirely prepared to understand how meekness can ever come into the

mastery of this world, unless we remember, not only that it is begotten out of strength, but also that it begets strength. No man ever learns to put forth his full moral strength in any enterprise, whether it is to reform a criminal or to convert a nation, until he has first learned meekness, the art of sinking himself in the work he has to do. Whoever would call out all there is within him, whoever would summon all his reserves of strength into the work he is doing, must first be able to say sincerely, "Let me be nothing, but let my work be everything." And that makes a meek man. When Lincoln, in the face of popular clamor and personal insult and injustice, surrendered the rebel commissioners taken from an English ship, he showed the superlative value of meekness as a means to the largest exercise of strength. For had pride, or personal resentment, or any of the paralyzing passions which obstruct the workings of small minds, beclouded his judgment or overruled it, he never could have made the bold, strong move which averted foreign war and set the nation right in the eyes of the world. It was his meekness that cleared the way for the fullest exercise of his great strength. It was a mark of his marvellous character. Once when he was conferring with friends who were seeking to persuade him to a course for which he did not believe the country was ready, the president urged them in turn to go home, agitate, rouse the public mind, create a strong sentiment, and make the nation ready to sustain him when he should act. But the character of the man

never flashed out more clearly than when he clinched his exhortation by saying, "Do not be afraid of hurting me. Do not spare me at all." There spoke the true meekness of the man. He was ready to be offered up by his own friends, if only the cause might gain, and the struggle be brought a little nearer to its righteous end. Who does not see how meekness contributes to strength in clearing away all those hampering weights of selfishness which weaken the blows we would strike, and diminish the force of our actions by the intrusions of our own egotism.

If these conclusions in regard to meekness be just, we find it relieved of much of that odium and contempt with which, in the common mind, it seems to be invested. It is a little easier, too, to see how meekness may ally itself with strength, and so perhaps, after all, be able to assert some claim on the world-inheritance which science tells us is to fall only to the strong. And in pursuance of that thought, it is no more than just to add that there is nothing in meekness inconsistent with that aggressiveness which is an invariable element of success and of conquest. Meekness is not passivity. It does not mean indolence, indifference, quiescence. It does not even mean non-resistance to wrong. A man may be meek without being inert. He may suffer personal wrong without resentment, and still utter the protest of conscience against the evil by which he suffers. We wrong a noble trait when we conceive of it as in any wise debarring men from those noble struggles for good, warfares against an-

cient wrongs, conflicts with adversities, which fall to the lot of every man, and in which it is every man's great glory to conquer. There is nothing to debar a meek man from the struggle for existence, and nothing about his meekness to imperil his chances of success. The great prototype of meekness, he who was called the meekest among all the sons of men, was one of the most aggressive, energetic, and positive leaders the world ever saw. The fame of Moses will always rank him among the warriors for righteousness, the uncompromising friend of good, and foe of evil. He never failed to protest against an evil, to make war upon the evil-doer, to struggle with all corruptions and errors of his age. Yet he carried through all that long life of battle such a lowly heart, so humble, so thoughtless of self, so patient under chastisement, that posterity has acquiesced in the old verdict, which extols his meekness. And was not he who pronounced the great beatitude, and prophesied the ultimate rule of the meek in the earth, that same Jesus who declared that he came not to bring peace on earth, but a sword. Indeed, the meek men of this world have frequently been its most aggressive. They have been the ones who have attacked great wrongs, intrenched in old custom and the selfishness of man; they have been the martyrs who upheld the new faith of the cross in its earliest encounters; they have been the reformers, uprooting abuses and demanding new rights for humanity; they have been the little band of the faithful, patient and persistent under adversity and persecution, who have

carried many a forlorn hope in religion through its dark hours, and commanded for it a respect and tolerance at last. Indeed, there are no fighters in this world like your meek men; because they strive lawfully, without anger or blinding resentments, and lose themselves in the end they have in view so utterly that no sacrifice nor hardship nor personal injury seems too hard to bear for the sake of the thing they would do. And when they die, a power goes forth out of their spirits which inflames the hearts of men everywhere, and rallies new converts, and strengthens the armies of righteousness, and conquers all the ages. Almost everywhere, in the great regenerative movements of society, you will find some meek man or woman, whose meekness has found its proper fruit in self-control and self-abnegation, whose determination, whose courage, whose resolute aggressiveness, give life and strength to all his associates, and feed the flagging fires of their faith.

It is a comfort and a reassurance to our Christian prepossessions to find a confirmation of the Saviour's blessing and approval of the meek in the course of external nature. There, where the law seems to be invariable that mildness and unselfishness have no chance, and that the weakest invariably goes to the wall, men usually find reasons for doubting or for disbelieving in the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. Yet at this very point the philosophers of broader range have already indicated the fact that evolution is proceeding along just the lines indicated by the Saviour's precepts. The law of natural selection,

which governs the lower world with sway almost absolute, loses its hold when it reaches man. Other influences have begun to operate. The universal struggle for existence, having produced the human soul, is about to cease. The warfares of men are materially diminished. Milder manners every year become more widely practised. More consideration is continually being shown to the weak. There is a universal tempering, in the human race, of the asperities of intercourse, the harsher features of character, the selfishness and hatreds of the past. The type of the coming man is not hard to determine. Put the heroes of the nineteenth century beside those of two or four thousand years ago, and you mark the direction in which the type has already changed. Then the popular hero was he who had slain his hundreds or his thousands,—some Cæsar fresh from his Gallic wars, some Cyrus or some Saul. Always it was the man of heavy hand and heart of iron, the warrior, the conqueror with his armies. But to-day men save their best laurels for those who, when they fight, strive to save strife, and put an end to war. This nation would not hold its great commander Grant in such high esteem if his courage had not been tempered with such great clemency, and if he had not shown that the only reason he made war was to found a lasting peace. Measure Gladstone or Lincoln with Xerxes or with Alaric, and you will see the vast growth of men's ideals toward the models of the Sermon on the Mount. And if this be the tendency of human growth, it is not difficult to un-

derstand that in the fulness of time this earth will be in the control of those who will rule it, not with the strong hand of selfish force, but with the mild yet effectual rule of the meek. And so the prophecies of science confirm the affirmation of our Lord, "The meek shall inherit the earth."

Indeed, that is all foreshadowed in the prospective triumph of Christianity. The broadening borders of the gospel kingdom will never finally be drawn till they include the earth, till the kingdoms of this earth become the kingdoms of God's Son. And the increasing sway of Christianity is not the victory of force, of pride, of coarse, brutal might, of the sword and the cannon; it is the sway of those milder forces personified in Jesus the Christ. We read that, in spite of his exalted rank among men, "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even unto the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven and things in the earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." That is the assured triumph of our Lord. In every sense of the word it is and shall be the victory of the meek.

IMMORTAL LIFE AND ETERNAL LIFE.

JOHN xi. 26. — "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die."

STRANGE words those to address to sorrowing and stricken mourners in the first bitterness of a loving grief! They are mysterious and blind. They seem at first to contain a mere paradox, and nothing more. But Jesus Christ never dealt in empty phrases. His words always cover the profoundest meanings. They are never words that darken counsel. But when we search out their inner sense, and find the truth they hide, it is always some deep and vital principle of spiritual life. There are many of Jesus' words which have to be seen from the inside of the Christian life in order to be understood. They are like the windows of some splendid cathedral. You look at these windows from the street, and they are dull, almost colorless, heavy and dark. But go inside the walls, stand in nave or transept, and then look, and they are bright and radiant with the symbols of faith and of holy thoughts. So the words of our Saviour never appear to us in all their power and meaning until we

look at them from within the walls of the Christian's house of life. And having once seen their transcendent beauty and significance, one can never in the world doubt them.

These words especially deserve the study and the thought of our own times. We have fallen on an age in the world's life which has lost somewhat of the simple faith in life beyond death which marked the early church. We are in a season of uncertainty and doubt. Men have learned so many new facts that their confidence in some of the old ones is becoming shaken. They do not feel so sure of any belief as they once did of all their beliefs. They want an argument for immortality which will amount to a demonstration, and there can no such argument be given them. They seek for evidences in the realm of the senses, — manifestations, signs, messages, from the unseen world to this. But clearly these are not evidences that can stand alone, but have in their turn to be attested. So it happens that there is a great searching of hearts and understandings over the soul's continuing life after death. There is abundant doubt, but there is also a vast preponderance of faith. Some old reasons for faith have been lost, but new ones have come to hand which are yet stronger. There can be no ultimate harm in this temporary upsetting. The truth is sure to stand the more firmly in the end. It may be obscured for a time. It is sure to shine the clearer at last. Indeed, there is something reassuring about this questioning process now going on. We are more likely to get at the truth by honest questions than we

are by a stupid and unreasoning silence. Anybody who would rather have the faith of ignorance than the faith of knowledge is hopelessly out of sympathy with God's methods of revelation. For he who would have us "prove all things" desires us only to "hold fast that which is good." I look on the intellectual unrest and doubt of to-day as the harbinger of a stronger faith and a more profound spiritual peace than ever has prevailed in the world. Let no man hesitate to go deep down to the very foundations of the truth. They are more secure than the everlasting hills. There are some things about our Christianity "which cannot be shaken."

But there is one great fact which is almost utterly overlooked by this generation in its search for religious truth, and especially in its search for a stronger faith in immortality. I mean the preparation of the mind to receive the truth. That is a part of the process just as necessary as the discovery of facts or principles which attest the truth. The discovery of a vein of coal or of gold means nothing whatever to the man who does not know the value of either mineral, or its relation to human life and progress. You might have let an ignorant man look through Leverrier's telescope and see all that the great astronomer ever saw; but he would never connect the disturbances of the planets with the appearance of Neptune, prophesying a new world from the perturbations of the old ones. To judge of the value of evidence, to perceive the bearing and the force of signs and reasons and indications, demands some familiarity,

some training and preparation in the field of thought where the matters lie which are under study. A man who has spent all his life studying the earth in the galleries of a coal-mine is not the sort of a person whose opinion you want in reference to the indications of the weather from the clouds.

It is here that we meet one of the great difficulties of our age. One of the grand reasons for the unbelief of our time is the failure of men and women to understand and rightly value the evidences of the life after death. Our generation has been brought up with its eyes fixed on the earth. What it sees there it appreciates and understands. It can tell what soil is good for what crops. It can point out the indications of mineral wealth, of gold and silver, of coal and oil, of copper and salt. It can draw you the lines in which trade will move, and prophesy where the most money is to be made. It can stake out states and territories, and import vast populations to fill them. It has contrived to master some of the most gigantic forces of the universe. It has done more than hitch its wagon to a star; for it has fastened that wagon to the tremendous force that sweeps over all stars and systems, and makes the universal electric fluid light its cities and drag its street-cars.

But all this it does without ever lifting its eyes from the ground. Every one of these discoveries, inventions, devices, in which our age is so expert, is of the earth, earthy. The training which has fitted men for all they have achieved in the nineteenth cen-

tury is precisely the kind of training which gives no help at all in the larger and more wonderful field of moral and spiritual truth. We sometimes deplore the scepticism of science, as if it were something against religion that the scientific people, the astronomers, the chemists, the biologists, and the botanists, are so slow to believe in the truths of the faith. Some time ago the editor of a well-known religious journal sent out a letter to scores of scientific men, asking them if they thought that science had established anything forbidding the belief in immortality. There was no objection to his taking that sort of testimony; but nevertheless it was much as if he had written to a hundred coal-miners to inquire if they knew of anything in their business to forbid the expectation that we may sometime take photographs in colors. It was like asking a farmer whether he thinks the ocean may be crossed in four days. The expert in one field has no necessary fitness for others. The exclusive attention of men to purely physical facts unfits them to be judges of spiritual facts. A man who has all his life studied nothing but the organism of the body is by that very fact unfitted to pronounce upon the life of the soul.

How, then, can we look for any stronger faith in the life of the soul, when men are so absorbed in the life of the body? What hope have we of impressing men's minds with the evidences of the continuing life of the soul, until we can draw their thoughts and their attention to the life of the spirit within them, as that goes on now and here? What would be the

advantage of more proofs of immortality, when we are not in a frame of mind to feel the force of those we already have? The most serious root of whatever doubt and uncertainty exist as to man's life beyond the grave comes from our feeble sense of his spiritual essence and the life of his soul this side of death. The great foe of our faith in the immortal world is not science. It is worldliness. All the scientific discoveries and all the scientific tracts cannot work such havoc with this faith as the living of a life of carnality, of worldly pleasure, of absorption in business cares. Life here in America, for example, is moulded not so much by the scientific books in the libraries and the homes, as by the market reports, the passion for money, the craze for social prominence. Our people are immersed in the love of this world. They have no time nor care for thoughts of any other. They hurry through life with their eyes bent fast upon the earth beneath their feet, upon the hurrying forms of flesh and blood which crowd around them. They treat one another as rivals, as investors, as traders, as customers, as clients, as constituents, as people with something to give or get for this life and this world alone. How seldom does the thought of the spiritual relations or interests of this great multitude find expression in its life and its ideals! We are living a daily life that is crowded to the uttermost with earth and earthiness. What wonder that when death thrusts itself across our pathway we are aghast at a presence which annihilates all that has stood to us

for life, and makes valueless all the things we have counted the prizes of life; what wonder that we have no resources with which to meet its awful inroads on our affections and our faith! A man must have some sense of the soul and its worth before he can believe in its continuous life. He must have some realization of the higher life that is going on within us before he can be expected to believe in its existence after the body has been dropped. How can he believe in that which has become to him but little more than a name?

For this belief in the future life is not a faith that can be based on creeds or arguments, or taken second-hand by inheritance or by transmission. You may repeat a formula that states it. You may link together a series of arguments which prove it. You may hold it in an outward and formal way, as you hold a belief in the rotundity of the earth. But to have a true and a satisfying sense of the soul's immortality needs more than this. Such a faith, as another has well said, "must be achieved." There must be a sense in yourself of yourself; and that sense can only come with and by the dawning of spiritual powers and affections within us. "Join thyself," said Augustine, "to the eternal God, and thou shalt be eternal." "Just in the degree in which we attain height of spiritual nature," says Dr. Munger, "are we able to predicate immortality of ourselves. It is not a thing to be announced by any 'lo here' or 'lo there,' but is within us, the fruit of faith, the achievement of spiritual endeavor." You can never make a man feel the

principles of the fine arts, of painting, for example, or of sculpture, by assertion and by description. There is no such thing as a second-hand imparting of the sense of beauty, the perception of aims and motives, the discrimination of means and methods which make up the artist's work. No man can have any possible idea of the meaning or of the methods of art until he has studied pictures, lived among them, watched the making of them, learned the spirit and the purposes of the artists who make them — in short, lived in an artistic atmosphere, and become imbued with artistic life. Neither can you make a man feel the reality of the immortal part of human nature, and its essential deathlessness, until you have induced him to live for his soul, and not for his body. As long as the physical life and all its associations fill his mind and absorb his attention, so long he will have small outlook into the life which transcends the physical.

When the astronomer undertakes to study the true place and relations of the globe on which we live, and learn all he can about its position in space, its movements and its connection with other celestial bodies and systems, he can do but little of his work in the day. The sun, pouring out its brilliant rays, is reflected from every particle of matter it illumines, and brings out every hue earth is capable of showing; and in the blaze of light and color the farther heavens are lost to sight. There is a curtain of bright beams, a mist of sunshine which obscures the vision of the student of the heavens. He must wait until the sun has set, and this deluge of reflected rays has

subsided. When the glare of the earth on which he stands is out of his eyes, he can begin his researches. Then the stars come out. Then the heavens deepen before his gaze. Then he discovers his true place, and marks the path of his planet-home among the other orbs. Then this earth, which seemed before to be all there was, now appears but a pin-point in space and a dwarf among giant worlds. The whole scene has changed, and with it all the inferences he may draw from it. The stars were all there before, but he could not see them because the conditions were not right.

So it is of the soul's sense of its own relations to life, to things eternal and deathless. As long as this world and its life are illuminated too strongly, nothing else is seen, nothing else felt. The glare of this world is in our eyes, and no other world seems real to us. If we would see our actual place and estate in life we must move to that hemisphere of experience and of thought where the glitter of the world and the flesh fades away, and all the garish light of these lower passions is quenched. Then the everlasting stars, the landmarks of our path down the eternities, shine down upon us in their splendor. Then we see the immensity of life, and all life means to us; and then we feel most of all how impossible a thing it is that that life should be quenched in the dissolution of the flesh, and go out when soul and body part company.

Here, then, is the explanation of Christ's words to the stricken sisters of Bethany, "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die." "Whosoever

liveth." You must be alive in order to know what deathlessness is. Begin to live as a soul, and not as an animal, if you want to be rid of the fear of death and the doubt of immortality. The way out of the doubts and fears which oppress us is not altogether by the gate of knowledge or of logic, but by the avenues of the spirit. We do not need more facts, but a better feeling. To those who already share the divine life the terrors of death are abolished. Its inevitable wrench to the spirit is mostly overcome, and its change no more than from life to life. If you are acquainted with your soul, if you have learned to live already with the immortal part of you, and to take pleasure in the things which minister to the life of that part of you, you will not deem it such a lonesome, blank, and unbearable thing to go away with your self, your real self, even out of this body into some other. But you must be something more than "dead in trespasses and sins," something more than choked with "the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches," before this thought can be realized in you. You must have a spirit that is not corrupted with the taint of money. You must be above the standards of fashion and society. You must be free from the lusts of the body, and the passions which canker through the flesh into the very substance of the soul. Because all these things mean the absorption of your nature in things which death will absolutely cut off. "How much did he leave?" asked somebody about a millionaire who had just

died. "Everything," was the answer; "he didn't take a cent with him." If a man lives on earth so that when he goes away from earth he has to leave "everything" that made up his life, his activities, his pleasures, then death means an awful experience of loss, of privation, of shrinkage. You cannot carry your money with you, nor your fashionable follies, nor your luxuries, nor your amusements. If these are all your life consists in, then you are not living in the sense that Jesus meant, and death must be a real, a terrible, a frightful fact to you. It is no wonder that they who have given themselves to these perishable things, shrink and shudder in the face of that event which parts them from their idols!

But "whosoever liveth," he shall never die. He whose real life consists not "in the abundance of the things that he possesseth;" he whose spirit is sustained and fed by streams of love; he who lives in faith on all the divine things; he who works out his faith in pure conduct, exalted aims, unselfish purposes, affectionate service to others,—that man does not die in death. Death only sets free for larger activity the soul which has already begun its undying developments.

Are you troubled, friend, by the fear of death? Do you shrink from the great change? Is the grave a deep pit to you? Is it the gate of terrors and the frontier of a land of doubts? There is a way to abolish all these grim fears and saddening doubts. Christ has taught us how we may despoil the great spoiler, conquer the conqueror, light up the valley of

shadows. It is by living in him, in his Spirit, by his power. Early was it said by one who knew the power of the Holy Ghost in his own life, "The sting of death is sin." But since Christ gives us the victory over sin, he takes away thereby the sting of death, and makes the way to the grave one bright and shining path of life.

" And wherefore should I seek above
Thy city in the sky,
Since firm in faith and deep in love
Its broad foundations lie.

Since in a life of peace and prayer,
Nor known on earth nor praised,
By humblest toil, by ceaseless care,
Its holy towers are raised.

Where faith the soul hath purified,
And penitence hath shriven,
And truth is crowned and glorified,
There, only there, is heaven!"

But we have to note, finally, how Jesus connects this removal of doubts and fears about death with belief on himself. "Whosoever liveth and believeth in me," is his word. There came with him into the world a certainty and a comfort in regard to death which the world had never known before. Men may range over all the proofs of immortality, and single out what seem to them the strongest or the most comforting; but, after all, the fact remains that the world got its most marked and abiding impulse toward this faith out of the life and spirit of Jesus Christ. No amount of special pleading can ever do

away with the real relation which exists between the coming of Jesus and the advent of a larger, firmer faith in life after death.

And why should this not be the most natural thing in the world? If it be true, as we have been trying to see, that our clear vision of this great reality depends upon our own spiritual integrity, why should not the purest soul that ever lived have seen most clearly the whole truth about the soul and its continuing life? Is it likely that Christ was mistaken? Could his faith have been misled? Did the illumination which filled him in every other matter fail him here? The centuries have searched in vain for a flaw in his morals, his great doctrines about God and man and life and spiritual law. He stands unimpeached in all; and the accumulating years but add new force to his authority, new weight to all his words. Can it be possible that in this teaching, which is assumed in all else that he taught, he has been groping in the dark like the rest of us? Is his strong affirmation of immortality only the utterance of a hope, the guess of a visionary, the illusion of a limited and human mind? Receive that if you can. But if you can doubt the sight of the clearest eye that ever swept the horizon of this life, and saw at its extremest edge the blue land-line of the heavenly country, remember that you violate one of the most accepted laws of common-sense. For nothing is better established in the minds of reasonable men than that it is safe to take the testimony of experts, and believe in the judgments of the wisest.

"It is wisdom," says another, "to see with the wise and to feel with the good." And to those of us who believe in the revelation of God in Christ, and who see the Father's mind in his, there can be but one feeling. If Jesus said that we are to live on after death, we have no right to doubt it. We believe on him; therefore, when death comes to us, it shall be no more death, but the herald of life.

It was on a warm spring evening, as the hours drew on to the midnight, that there came through the poet's open window the strident cry of the wild-fowl, winging their way northward. And that strange sound borne in on the night wind suggested to his mind the lines that Bryant once wrote, full of this calm trust which grows with the expanding soul.

"Whither midst falling dew,
While glow the heavens with the last steps of day,
Far through their rosy depths dost thou pursue
Thy solitary way?"

There is a Power whose care
Teaches thy way along that pathless coast,
The desert and illimitable air—
Lone wandering, but not lost.

Thou'rt gone, the abyss of heaven
Hath swallowed up thy form; yet on my heart
Hath deeply sunk the lesson thou hast given,
And shall not soon depart.

He who from zone to zone
Guides through the sky thy certain flight,
In the long way that I must tread alone
Will lead my steps aright."

THE PREMATURE JUDGMENT OF DIVINE THINGS.

1 COR. iv. 5. — "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts; and then shall every man have praise of God."

THESE words of Paul had in view a specific and particular event and its results. They point to the coming of Jesus in visible form and outward power, which was unquestionably the expectation of his apostles, within their own generation. In his earlier letters, at least, Paul shares this belief; and at the time he wrote our text he was, like his fellow-men, in expectancy of an immediate appearing of the Lord, in power and glory, to right the wrongs of the groaning world, to judge the evil-doer, and reward the righteous, to make an end of sin, and begin the eternal reign of righteousness. In his later thought he seems to have discarded that portion of his belief which localized and appointed a date for the Lord's coming, and to have better understood the meaning of Jesus' prediction concerning his advent. But

while he cherished this non-essential misconstruction of Christ's words, he was permitted to see the grand fact which he never ceased to teach, that in the fulness of time the day should come when the hidden things of life, its mysteries and its perversities, all the conflict of good and of ill, should be unfolded, explained, and cleared up, and all made to attest the glory and the goodness of the Father.

That is the thought of our text. And the lesson which is drawn from this truth is that men ought not to *prejudge* the work of God. The moral creation is not finished, but progressing. Its walls are still rising. Its towers still bear the scaffolding of the toil which carries it forward. And Paul's injunction is, "Wait. Do not judge the work till it is finished. Remember how much will develop as the toil goes on. Consider the things yet remaining undone which will change the aspect of the whole. Wait patiently, and be sure that the issue of this moral universe shall redound to the glory of God."

Centuries have passed since those wise and inspired words were uttered. And still there is need, as this advent season returns, which reminds us of the deliberate pace at which the work of creation's perfection goes on, that we repeat these words of the great apostle to our hearts. We need to urge that thought upon the doubting spirits of the day, whose unbelief is darkened by so much gloom, and even despair. We must teach it to our own impatient hearts. We must use it as a prop to faith and a foregleam of knowledge. Life is not to be judged by its present aspects.

The present can never be properly estimated if taken by itself. All things are to be interpreted in the light of their results, their final issue, their culmination. Creation is not to be treated like a finished cathedral, whose details are all done; much less like a crumbling ruin, whose disintegration has begun. It is to be viewed rather as one looks at the life and interests of the expanding city or the undeveloped nation. It is not done, but doing. Its promises are as yet far greater than its fulfilments. It must be clothed in the beams of hope. For time will prove the groundlessness of misgivings and fears. The outcome of it all will satisfy yearning hearts. And the labor of every honest soul toward the grand result will "have praise of God."

I. There is no truth, let it be said, which needs a more vigorous enforcement upon the pessimists of our day than this general principle of our text. There is no answer to their complaints and criticisms about the creation except in this truth. There is full answer to them in its leading thought. The great mistake of those who seek to undermine the belief in benevolent Power presiding over the creation, is in treating this world as if it were a finished product, its aims all fully developed, its resources all laid bare, its development only a circular progress, in which experience repeats itself, and no more. But if anything may be regarded as well established in fact as well as in faith, it is the scientific doctrine that this is a creation in process of evolution. It is a growing crop, a web in the loom,

a tale half told, a picture but just sketched in. And even those who refuse to admit that creation shows any signs of intelligence will allow that the bearing and influence of things present on one another cannot be well understood until they have worked out to their results in some future time. And if it be conceded that there may after all be an intelligent purpose in nature, a plan by which all things are working, then by so much the more must we perpetually hold judgment in suspense upon some parts of this present life.

When an artist has projected a great picture, when he has completed all his studies, conceived his plan, and decided upon his methods, he proceeds to make his preliminary sketches. He roughly draws his various figures, in such postures and with such general expression as he means them to have in the canvas where he will finally place them. They are roughly done at first, and, taken by themselves, suggest no adequate notion of what the general composition will be. Perhaps he even paints each sketch with some elaboration. But even then it would be impossible to make a fair estimate of any of these carefully studied figures, or pronounce upon their coloring; because in the mind of the artist every one of these details has a definite relation to every other; and neither face nor figure, outline nor coloring, can be understood, except as it is thought of in connection with all the rest. So the real value of all these separate particulars cannot be estimated alone. But when the artist begins to draw them

in together, when he groups these sketches on one surface, when he blends the colors, and combines them in relation to the lights and shadows of the picture, then one may begin to see, and not till then, all that the studies contained. They can only be interpreted by their final combination, their place in the finished picture.

Or take an illustration still more analogous to the case we are seeking to make plain, because it is a part of a scheme which is never finished, but always going on as long as the merchant does business: let any man of affairs undertake some large and complicated enterprise of profit, like the improvement of a great estate, or, we will say, the building of an extensive railroad line. Now, in order to make a fair judgment of the various steps of that work, it is necessary always to keep in mind its end. There are many stages in the progress of the enterprise when it seemed more like a work of demolition than one of construction. The claims upon public and private lands for location, the cutting away of forests, the digging down of hills, the rendering of property unfit for its old uses, — all these seem like undoing and depreciating and destroying. The debt, too, incurred for construction, the mortgages given on this newly made property, is it not a thriftless use of money to put it into this highway in a wilderness? Is it wise to undertake all these risks, expend all this treasure, devote all this thought, care, anxiety? Well, the one answer of the capitalist, of the engineer, of the managers of the scheme, is simply,

"Wait and see." You must wait till you see these untenanted fields taken up by the thronging immigrants. You must wait till these streams begin to pull at the wheels of factories, these plains to turn yellow with the ripening grain, these scattering settlements to grow to hamlets and towns and thriving cities. You must wait till the heavy-laden trains toil across the country with great freights of produce, and come back bearing the supplies for these fresh communities. That is the answer to all your queries. That proves that the work was one of construction, that it built up and increased values, and enlarged the utilities of the country. It proves that the investment was directed toward a genuine profit. It shows how well bestowed was all the thought of the financier and the builder. The purpose of that early work does not appear till late in the process of the scheme. But when it does come, it explains and justifies everything preliminary.

Now, are not these cases quite analogous to the moral universe, or perhaps more exactly, the universe in its moral relations? These, too, in any fair construction must be viewed according to their issue, and not according to their temporary and transitional aspects. We must wait "the time." We must not expect the solution of these mysteries of life and being in this twilight season of our existence. We must wait "until the day break and the shadows flee away." The gospel names the only ground upon which the past and present of this weary world can be reconciled to our tolerance. "Judge nothing," says

Paul, "before the time, until the Lord come." Remember, he seems to say, you are beholding only a transitory and provisional state of things. The whole scheme of life centres in, and takes its meaning from, its high purpose. The means and the process are only to be read in the light of the achievement of the Creator's aim. The whole of the long and laborious progress, wrought out with such expenditure of thought, such pangs and agony, such suffering of the flesh, such anguish of spirit, is but the prelude to creation's true life, the imparting of the life of God to his creation as fast and as far as it could receive the same, till it shall enjoy the fulness of a divine spirit in that day when the kingdoms of this world shall be subject to the will and spirit of love; that wished-for time which men doubtfully expect in the "millennium;" that epoch which the gospel calls "the coming of the Lord." I make now no dogmatic claim. I do not undertake to explain the inexplicable, nor unravel the tangle, of which we have just said that it cannot be done "until the Lord come." But let me try, in what measure I may, to show that the gospel presents a reasonable and satisfactory ground for faith, while we await in patience the culmination of the divine purpose, "until the Lord come." Remember, there is no such thing as demonstration in such a matter as this. We can only indicate a reasonable theory. For its full demonstration we must await the "fulness of time."

II. "The crucial test of a thoughtful mind," says another, "is a sense of the mystery of life in this

world." Nor is there any relief to that sense, especially as it approaches the fact of evil and of sin, save in some such hope as the cheerful promises of the age encourage, that this is a growing world, developing toward some high end, whose attainment shall explain all the windings of the path by which it was reached. The chief mysteries of this world are not simply those which concern the future. The present and the past baffle the bravest and the brightest thought. The soul itself is the seat of all mysteries.

"I am. How little more I know.
Whence came I? Whither do I go?
A centered self that feels and is;
A cry between the silences;
A shadow-birth of clouds at strife,
With sunshine on the hills of life;
A shaft from nature's quiver cast,
Into the future from the past;
Between the cradle and the shroud,
A meteor's flight from cloud to cloud!"

WHITTIER.

And if we turn from the soul itself, backward over human history, outward over the known experience of the creation below man, it is full of food for questions, with very little material for enlightening answers. So that our only refuge from these manifold perplexities is in that pledge of our text, that the moral culmination of the universe, the "coming of the Lord," will "bring to light the hidden things of mystery."

Take, for example, the long centuries of man's life

on earth. Who can read of them without weariness? It is a lifelong, age-long tale of misery and strife. From the first it has been a struggle against the powers of earth, air, and water, the forces of the overworld and the underworld. When the Athenians built the Parthenon, crowned with the figure of the victorious Pallas Athene, they represented her standing with her spear planted on the serpent under her feet, symbol of the earth and its untamed powers, in token of the triumph of the civilization of Greece over the turbulence, the savagery, the earthliness, of man; and surrounding the majestic temple was a girdle of noble sculptures, symbolizing, in the combats of heroic youth with the Centaurs and Amazons, the struggles of Attica against the foes of order and of law. Those battered relics of an elder art depict the whole story of humanity. Warfare, strife, rivalries, collisions of interests, the strong overcoming the weak, selfishness robbing its neighbor, violence plundering and destroying, bloodshed everywhere, till it should seem as if the crimson stream must

“The multitudinous seas incarnadine,
Making the green one red.”

Take your stand at any given point in the line of history,—beside the primitive man who dwelt in the caves of the Swiss lakes; beside the shepherd kings of Egypt, in the day of Xerxes, or of Julius Cæsar, or Charlemagne, or William the Conqueror, and looking at that point of time, and that alone, it is doubtful if you would not pronounce the world under a curse.

For you will find them all full of wars and rumors of wars, nation rising against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, the wretched feuds which have turned this fair earth into a hell, paving it with the bones of slaughtered men, making it echo with the cries of their suffering. And it seems as if, shut in to the actual present of any age this world ever saw, one must sigh like the poet, in the dreary words,—

“Oh! never sin and want and woe this earth will leave,
And the bells but mock the wailing sound, they ring so cheery.
How long, O Lord! before thou come again?”

If we take the life of the world before man came into it, the same truth holds good. And it is little wonder that those who reject or have never known the only solution of the mystery of pain, of suffering, of physical evil, should be goaded to such a thought as broke out in the terrible sneer of Voltaire, “A singular notion of universal good, composed of the fever, the gout, of all sufferings, of all crimes, of death and daily damnation.” Long before man appeared, the course of nature seemed to forecast his own destiny of struggle and of pain. For dumb creatures, without reason or consciences, dwelt in a world of strife and anguish like his own. The whole animate creation, till man appeared, was divided into the devourers and the devoured. The gnat fell a prey to the swallow, and the swallow to the hawk, and the hawk to the eagle. Great monsters grappled with each other in mortal struggle. The lion fleshed his fangs in the gentle deer, and the serpent writhed his

venomous way to the nest of the dove. Thorns and thistles tore the beast's tender flesh, and flinty rocks cut his feet. The cyclone uprooted the forest where he had his lair, the flood swept him along in its raging whirlpool, or the lightning struck him dead. There were pain and strife and evil in this world long before man added the bane of his misguided will.

But we need not multiply these pictures of a dreary past. Enough for us that we see in them, once for all, this pregnant fact. Take any period of time, epoch in history, age of animal development, generation of humanity, by itself, look at it apart from all relations, either as the outgrowth of a past or the germ of a future, the child of an elder age whose stern features are softened in the milder aspects of its offspring, or the beginning of a better day whose blessings shall rest on the very rigors and hardships which once seemed unrelieved in their severity, and you can make nothing cheerful out of it, nothing significant of beneficence and love. Treat the creation as a closed circle, shutting out all higher ends than those that appear in the present, and you have a universe which justifies any scepticism, and gives the reins to despair. The only thing which permits you for an instant to cherish the thought of benevolence, kindness, love, in connection with this groaning creation, is the thought implanted in our minds by Paul's exhortation, "Judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who will bring to light the hidden things of darkness."

Ah, the light, the restful suggestion, the encour-

aging power, there is in that thought! It is the very key to faith, the warrant to hope. We have no right to judge any point of life and experience by itself. It is like studying the human eye as if it were a separate organism. It is like trying to describe the Declaration of Independence without any allusion to the Stamp Act, the battle of Lexington, or Parliament and George the Third. But once admit the thought that all the past and all the present are looking forward, building up powers and resources for the future to use and draw upon; training and disciplining intuitions and aptitudes, senses, functions, volitions; laying deep courses of foundation-stone on which to raise the fair structure of a better, a holier life, and you have a ground on which to stand in hope. If it be allowed us to say and believe that the universe is not stationary, but growing; its destiny one of peace and harmony; its sufferings incidental to a higher enjoyment; its pangs the "growing pains" of an expanding organism — then, I say, we can afford to suspend our gloomy judgments, give faith her rights, and frankly facing every mysterious evil, from the crushing of a fly to the overwhelming of a nation, still believe —

“That nothing walks with aimless feet,
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete.

That not a worm is cloven in vain,
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivelled in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain.

Behold we know not anything,
I can but trust that good will fall,
At last — far off — at last to all,
And every winter change to spring."

There is the suggestion of a special application of this thought to our own personal life, in the assurance of the text that in the culmination of moral experience the mystery of our own private struggles, griefs, disappointments, and failures will be interpreted, and find their proper justification. When the heart cries out of its inward pains, "Why was I born to this suffering?" the spirit answers, "Wait and see." When the weary powers, after a lifetime of toil like that of Sisyphus, rolling the stone to the hilltop only to see it fall back to the bottom, demand the meaning of this seemingly fruitless task, the answer is still, "Wait and see." When grief sits among the graves of its lost ones and sobs its plaint, still the same answer, "Trust in the Lord and wait patiently for him." Perhaps in some blessed day of insight here on earth, perhaps not until the other side of the mysterious veil, somewhere and somehow the meaning will come to you and to me, when God shall "make manifest the counsels of the hearts," and "then every man shall have praise of God." But "until the Lord come" with revelation to your soul, faith may sustain the heart with the promises of revelation and the confirmation of knowledge. The gospel from the high peaks of inspiration points out the blessed Canaan of a world redeemed, of evil overcome, of the dark mysteries of suffering and evil

explained in the light of their issue. What the solution of it all may be we cannot know. That there is a solution, and one which glorifies God and blesses man, we may not doubt. Those who have spoken with authority and from the very counsels of God have seen it in store. Those who have read the past with the closest insight find there the prediction of its coming. There is light on all this world's ancient sorrows in the happiness of to-day. The sufferings of Valley Forge have borne fruit in the peace at ten thousand warm firesides to-day. The martyrdoms of the infant church are explained and glorified in the might and the joy of a growing Christendom. Even Calvary is a shade less dreadful in the light of the help which has issued from its cross; and it still looks forward to the "coming of the Lord" for its complete illumination. For the great Captain of our salvation "was made perfect through suffering," that all men might have praise of God.

It would surely seem as if men ought to be as wise in the judgments of the world in which they live as they are in judging the mimic world in which they seek to make a picture of human life. Set a man down in some theatre, and let him watch the unfolding of the play. Let him follow the fortunes of the characters, and note the multiplying complications of the plot. It moves along in thickening schemes of evil, with increasing perplexities and appeals to the sympathy. The mother hears her son is lost at sea; the father believes that his daughter has dishonored the good name of his house; the chief friends are

estranged by evil suspicions; the hero is beset by plots and violence, in a net of circumstance which closes more and more tightly about him. And so the curtain falls upon the middle of the drama. Suppose the man has but little experience in play-going, and sets out now to leave the place. "This is a sad play," he says. "Everything here is at cross-purposes. The good people are in trouble, the bad are in comfort. I do not like a play so dismal." There is but one answer to his criticism — the play is not done. There is more to come. And when it comes it will untangle all this skein of evils. Wait till the curtain rises on the next act. That will repay you for all your waiting. You shall see the wanderer restored to his mother's arms. You shall see the stigma taken from the daughter's name, and herself reinstated in her father's love. You shall see the reconciliation of the sundered friends, the rescue of the hero from all his trouble, the downfall of villainy, and the establishment of the right. Then, and not till then, will you have the right to judge this drama, and call it good or bad. And in this larger drama of real life, where men and women are the actors, and all life's years of mingling experience the scene, how much more must we let judgment linger, and patience hold the mind, till we know in what it all culminates, and what it all has meant. We shall read life's meaning in life's aim and end. Then, when the strife of souls has eliminated all their evil, "all men shall have praise of God." And out of the hearts of the redeemed, God shall have praise of all men.

SOME THINGS SETTLED.

HEB. xii. 27. — "That those things which cannot be shaken may remain."

THERE are two ways of viewing religious truth and its manifestations which are unhappily as common as they are false. The first is the belief held by the conservative party in every church that all the truths of religion have been transmitted to the human mind, and that the oracles of God are hereafter to be forever dumb. "The truth," they would say, "has been given once for all. Its final revelation has been made in Jesus Christ and his apostles. When their lips closed, the Holy Ghost ceased to speak. Since their utterances no new word has been uttered bearing upon the vital and necessary principles of the spiritual life of man. And all that theology has to do is to restate, and enforce with illustrations and arguments which best address successive generations, the substantial facts made known once for all, not to be increased and not to be diminished, the unchangeable, exact, and invariable doctrines which the church has taught from the beginning." This is the belief which controls con-

servative minds, and speaks in the aggressive affirmations of the creeds. That was the conviction which wrote the triple-barred sentences of the Andover Creed, and made a heretic of every bright mind in the Congregational Church to-day. It was that spirit which earlier still crystallized the dogmas of the Athanasian Creed, which refuse either to be pulverized or to fit themselves to modern thought. It is a misfortune to the cause of religion when this sentiment is in the ascendancy. For it effectually kills all the life of religious thought, and encourages the false notion that the golden age of Christendom's religious experience is in the past.

But quite as pernicious is that other belief, which holds that there is nothing final in the truths of religion, and that even Christianity is a transitory system, as ephemeral as all others. "There is no final authority in religion," say these restless minds. "In the fields of the infinite there is nothing final. No man or woman has been authorized to speak the last word of religion. There are no settled formularies which may not be undone any day by some new message from the unseen. Religious knowledge, like all other knowledge, is progressive, and can never be more than man's imperfect attempt to state his theory of the life that is higher than his own. And so the religious life of every age differs from that of every other age; so doctrines grow old and wear out; so systems of belief pass into disuse. Nothing is fixed. No belief can be warranted to stand for any definite time. The faith of humanity is in a perpet-

ual state of transfer." This is the view of religion maintained by that class of minds which delights to call itself "advanced," and which is forever "setting its face to the morning light." It is the spirit which unsettles human faith, and welcomes the most trivial speculation, and is impatient of whatever savors of age. It is the very opposite of that other we have described, and in its way is equally false and dangerous.

For neither of these attitudes toward religious truth is right, though each contains the semblance of a fact. It is not true, in the first place, that all necessary truth has been revealed to man. It is not true that any human statement of divine facts contains the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Knowledge is and must ever be expansive, as long as God is infinite and humanity open to instruction; for not a month or a year passes without its revelation of fact and its advance in philosophy. The sum of knowledge is a growing quantity. Its accumulations are incessant and without limit. For religious knowledge is really our acquaintance with the Infinite God, his nature, his purposes, and his administration. And since God is unfathomable, the knowledge of him must forever grow. New light is a necessity of the dawn and the increasing day. There is nothing in this proposition which conflicts with the teaching of our Master. Indeed, this is the teaching of Christ and his apostles. The Son of God came into the world to establish a system of truth which should supersede old views, and reconstruct old doctrines.

His gospel supplanted the law and the prophets. His was the "new" covenant replacing the "old." In him men found a greater than Elijah, a superior to Moses. And he assured his friends and followers that they should still be taught by the Holy Spirit when he himself was gone from them. In the same way his most illustrious disciple, St. Paul, declares that "now we know in part," and prophesies a time to come when we shall "know even as also we are known."

And so, too, all through the history of the church the same law has manifested itself, the same progress from truth to truth has gone on. Every century has yielded up some dogma it supposed to be imperishable, and revised it into some new form which was as good as a reconstruction. The theology of to-day is a vastly different thing from the theology of five hundred years ago. Justin and Origen and Tertullian would find themselves ill at ease among the modern sects, and so would the Archbishop of Canterbury in a church council of the fifth century. It is a law of our race that there shall be as constant an advance in the apprehension of religious truth as there is in the mastery of all other forms of knowledge and of faith. But does this fact carry with it the implication that nothing is ever settled in the realm of religious ideas? Are there no imperishable ideals? Is there nothing durable under these shifting aspects of truth? Is all the creed subject to perpetual revision? Are there indeed no finalities in religion? And is it true that all that we hold for true we must hold as an

open question, liable to refutation within any circuit of the sun?

To answer these questions only requires that we shall remember the words of our Saviour, who, while he was indeed the great innovator upon the old faith, nevertheless said with the utmost solemnity, "I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil." There are some things in religion which we may regard as settled forever. Some questions are closed, and there is no need of reopening them. The human mind is forever on the march, but it does not necessarily burn its baggage and equipments every time it breaks camp. The aspect and the statements of truth may change without any change in the truth itself. We may remodel the house without disturbing the foundations; we may even enlarge and alter the ground plan without changing the original lines of the dwelling. The tree may grow from a seed most insignificant and small. But the plan of the tree was all in the seed at first, and has only unfolded and enlarged itself from elements which were dormant in the germ. So the great systems of religious truth which have absorbed the mind of Christendom may be as unlike the early messages of inspiration whispered in the ears of Abraham and Moses and the prophets as the oak in full foliage is unlike the acorn from which it sprung. But the Christianity of to-day was all in the early utterances of revelation, — germinal, undeveloped, in the elemental form, but as truly outlined there as the matured organism is sketched in the embryo.

With all the transformations which matter and material life undergo, there are some elements and principles which endure. And with all the changes in the aspects which religious truth assumes, it is untrue to assume that nothing is settled; that there are no finalities; that every article in the creed is liable to amendment.

I beg you to consider, in illustration of this statement, which I hope to make seem reasonable and true, the analogy of scientific and religious truth. It is held to be one of the virtues of the scientific method that it insists on holding all its systems, whether of fact or hypothesis, open to revision. And so any new discovery may upset all the old ones. Any new fact may render the text-book just issued from the press as antiquated as a last year's bird's-nest. And the freedom of the scientist to explore and speculate and theorize is held up to the devout as a condition most desirable among the religious. The Church is urged to make her creeds as supple as the theories of the most flexible scientific school, and to hold them subject to revision down to their last and most vital particulars. But it seems to be forgotten that while the facts of knowledge are subject to every test which may be put upon them, and while every scientific theory is held only as a theory liable to change and amendment, yet that science itself holds a great body of truths past all controversy, and quite beyond the possibility of disproof. It is by no means the whole subject-matter of the scientist's faith which he holds open. He does not admit that

his entire creed is a debatable question. There are many matters on which he regards the last word as having been spoken, and questions on which he will not debate at all. Who will allow for an instant that it is an open question whether the earth revolves about the sun, or the sun about the earth? What man of science will stop to argue with anybody who holds that the earth is flat? These are matters which science treats as settled once for all. To debate them further is a waste of breath; for they are supported by such evidences, testimonies which appeal so unanswerably to the human understanding, that there is not the shadow of a possibility that they will ever be called in question. The law of gravitation is a settled fact of human knowledge. It is a matter we may properly refuse to discuss; and if anybody should tell a scientist that he ought to hold his creed in regard to gravitation open for more light, he would probably answer that he would be glad for all the new light he could get, but that he was sure that all the light in the world would not shake the confidence with which he says to-day, "I believe in the law of gravitation." In the field of human knowledge there is an infinity of things to be found out. But some things we do know finally and once for all. It is a settled fact that two plus two equals four. It is fixed beyond dispute that the earth is a spheroid in shape. The assertion of science that the track of the storms which cross North America is an easterly one is final. No amount of free inquiry, no investigation,

no light from above or beneath, will alter that fact; it is a fact, a known fact, a fact which no circumstance can alter till the storms themselves begin to move by some other law. Science, indeed, is unsettled, does not pretend to have its returns all in, nor its accounts all closed; nor does it promise that it ever will have its affairs brought to this condition. But with all its ardor for new truth, it proceeds upon the assumption that there are some old truths which are settled forever. They lie at the foundation of knowledge and thought. They are the roots of all our wisdom. And whatever may be built above them, or whatever may grow out of them, will make no difference to their nature or relations to the whole body of truth.

It is a mistake, then, to suppose that the vaunted fact of progress in all knowledge implies in any sense the upheaval of the foundations every time new light is thrown upon familiar things. The discovery of the daily rotation of the earth did not alter, what it explained, the familiar fact of sunrise and sunset. The discovery of the cause of the sun's heat would not alter the fact that that heat is the source of this planet's life.

Whatever may be disclosed in chemical or physical science will not in the least affect the reality of the action of the electric fluid or of oxygen. The lightning and the thunder will still go together, and oxygen will feed fire, and nitrogen retain but a slight affinity for other substances. Discovery cannot unsettle these facts, but only interpret and disclose

their relations. In fine, whenever in the progress of thought a truth is ascertained, it is found out once for all, and future discovery will only serve to illustrate and classify that truth, never to unsettle it.

If these things are true in the field of science, why should they not be in the field of religious thought, which men are trying to bring under the rules of scientific usage? Truth is truth, in theology as well as in chemistry. And so far forth as our creeds stand for truth, they need no revision and they will get none. The announcement that theology is a progressive science does not mean that we must hold ourselves ready every morning to rebuild our creeds from the foundation. It simply means we must be willing to open new doors and windows, or even to add new rooms to accommodate the new truth, sure to be revealed. It is not a perpetual warning to quit our house of faith; it is only a clause which binds us to keep the dwelling in repair and fit it with modern improvements.

It is a matter for regret, therefore, that any mind should regard the common truths of religion as evanescent because they assume variable shapes, or treat them as in a decline because they are changing. Nor will anything be clearer in the survey of our own faith than that, whatever may be destined to disappear, some things have come to stay. Take, for example, our belief in the divine existence. Is that one of the articles of faith which must be forever reckoned an open question? Is this corner-stone of truth never to be cemented into its place, but always

remain loose and ready for removal? There are those who will tell you so, who call the idea of God a human invention, who deny the reality behind the name, and who look upon the changing phases of belief in deity as merely the mutations of human opinion under the influence of growing knowledge. We might as well say that the shifting look of the world under the early twilight and the breaking day is a change in the human eye. The outward world is not a fiction. Its appearances are based upon the solid substance it presents. And he would be a shabby logician who should argue that the varying look of the world was evidence that there is no world. Just as flimsy is the doctrine which wins applause when the popular orators of scepticism utter it, that because men vary so in their conception of God, we are to infer that God is only a name by which we cover our ignorance of the unknowable. That men's conception of God should change as they see more and more of his nature and its manifestations is not a matter for surprise. But is it not a singular logic which calls this expanding conception of God a proof that there is no God?

It may well be true, nay, it must be true, that as the mind of man grows into fuller powers new visions of the glory of God will present themselves, and things undreamed of will be added to that ideal of him which devout hearts have already expressed in their *credo*. But none of these will affect the truth about him which was unfolded from the germinal thought in the simple faith of Abraham, to the

sublime announcement of his fatherhood and his love made known in Jesus Christ. That fundamental of our faith is fixed for all time. When we say, "we believe in one God whose nature is love," we affirm a fact which time cannot shake, nor fresh light annul. Whatever may be revealed of the mystery of that infinite personality, however high human thought may ascend into its sublime dignities, however profoundly the heart of the world may be suffered to sound in the depths of its love, the great fact remains fixed, immovable, steadfast as space, everlasting as time itself, the corner-stone of every creed, the flame that lights every torch of hope, the life of thought.

"Thou comest not, thou goest not,
Thou wert not, wilt not be;
Eternity is but a thought
By which we think of thee.
Thy vastness is not young or old;
Thy life hath never grown;
No time can measure out thy days,
No space can make thy throne."

So let the restless spirits who love to prophesy changes to come, and alarm the timid with predictions of the day when present faiths will be as far behind the fashion of the times as Calvin's or as Anselm's is to-day, let these flippant oracles spur us on to livelier and devouter thoughts. They cannot take away from us the truths we already hold. They may point out to us the shining peaks of truth, unscaled as yet by any finite foot, from whose immaculate heights the eye of the spirit will some day

range into the far countries of eternity, as it now roves over the fields of the present. They may tell us that when we have reached those measureless heights of thought, the little spot, which to-day seems to us so large and so important will have shrunk out of sight. They may tell us how changed the universe will look from that exalted station, and what a different light will be shining on the face of life. But there need be no fear in the heart of the simplest believer that that new world will be one from which the ancient truths, the familiar and the necessary facts of being, will be missed. God will be there still, as he is here; and in that day we shall remember that he was here, as we shall then feel him there. And if in those blessed ages we care to look back upon these scenes, we shall see them as mountaineers look down upon the valleys which they left all wrapped in shadows, now blazing with the light of the sun that has climbed the heavens all day above their heads. Climb on, ambitious soul! Press up the utmost heights of thought! Pass the last bounds of knowledge! But be sure that when thou standest at that dizzy altitude where thought begins to merge itself in simple consciousness of the infinite, even then thou shalt find thyself encompassed by that same presence and power which thou hast already learned to call thy Father, that One before whom the psalmist exclaimed in simple trust, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

There is another article in every Christian's creed which affirms the spiritual supremacy of Jesus Christ, and many a heart that trusts in him and believes in his Lordship as the commissioned Saviour of men, is led to fear that his is after all a waning influence, destined to be supplanted by some new leadership, some better interpretation of the divine. Is that one of the inevitable changes of progress in theology, in religious knowledge? Will our advances take us beyond the Christ? Will he become a leader of the past? And must this reverence we have fixed on him, and this love we have so freely bestowed, be transferred to some other?

You are probably familiar with those startling paragraphs which appear from time to time in the columns of our newspapers, which purport to give a true account of the approaching end of this physical world. You are told of the gradual cooling of the earth; of its slow approximation to the sun; of the slackening speed of that luminary; of the symptoms, mathematically deduced, of the inevitable freezing up of this world, and then of its precipitation into the sun; and when the mind is thoroughly depressed over the frigid prospect, the only relief you find is in the announcement that the accomplishment of this catastrophe is likely to consume so many billions of years that it is difficult to figure them to the eye. The mind ceases to take much interest in an affair so remote, and you go out and bask in the sun and plant your flowers and your corn without one misgiving over this freezing fate in store. Be-

fore that day comes you will be beyond the reach of its rigors.

So it seems to me we may feel when men prophesy the transient character of Jesus Christ's reign over human souls. Our spiritual astronomy foretells a time when he shall no longer be the centre of our religious sentiments as he is to-day. Indeed, his chief interpreter to men, St. Paul himself, has taught us as much. For he tells us that when Christ shall have put all enemies under his feet, then shall he deliver up the kingdom unto God the Father, "that God may be all in all." But that will be in the distant age when the city of our dwelling-place will have no need of the sun, "for the Lord God giveth them light." It will be in the age when we shall have no more need of creeds, or Scriptures, or guides at all, for every one shall know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. If you care to look forward to that day of which the Scriptures plainly teach, you are of course free to do so; but it will be rather hard to find in it a forecast of the supersedure of our blessed Lord as the world's Redeemer. To him who sees in Jesus not merely a great teacher, not simply a good man, an example and an inspiration to his fellows, but the image of the invisible God, in whom is revealed all that it is possible for finite minds to know of the Deity in their mortal estate; to him this union of the divine and the human is a revelation which cannot be duplicated, accomplished in a nature which cannot and will not lose its place in the divine scheme until knowledge gives place to intuition,

and we no longer need to read by sign and symbol, because we see eye to eye.

“Forever climbs the morning star,
Without ascent or motion;
Forever is its daybreak shed
On the spirit’s boundless ocean.”

You may steer by that star as long as your bark tosses on the troubled waters of this life. You may trust in the light of that daybreak until it is swallowed up in the blaze of the eternal day it heralds.

There are other articles of the faith which, if space permitted, we might allege as examples of the elements which change not, “the things which cannot be shaken.” What conceivable discovery, what enlargement of knowledge, can ever change our faith in the connection between righteousness and blessedness? All that the microscope and the crucible, the scalpel and the telescope, can bring to light; all the theories which human thought can succeed in identifying with law, will not to the slightest extent affect the truth, as old as the nature of God himself, that “they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing.” You can pin your faith to that fact as one which time will only make the more impressive and eternity cannot reverse. As long as you and I live in this universe — and it will be a long day before we find ourselves in any other — we shall find the law to hold that the good man bears a blessing in his life, and that the bad man carries a curse. That is a final truth. It is as unchangeable as the being of God. Upon that foundation we may build the struc-

tures of character, in the settled conviction that no vicissitude of thought can ever weaken or destroy them.

Even so it is an equally durable truth that good is stronger than evil, and must prevail over it. That is a law of life which men have been slow to comprehend, though it was one of the first for God to announce. From the day when the thought was flashed upon the mind of early man, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head," down to the utterances of the gospel seer, "There shall be no more curse," the steadfast proclamation of the revealed Word has been, the evanescence of evil, the permanence of good, the weakness of the wrong, the all-conquering strength of the right. Human experience all goes to strengthen the affirmation. Every century makes it plainer that evil is doomed, is being crowded out of existence, is sure to have an end. There is no black and terrible surprise in store for the loving and trustful hearts that just begin to take firm hold upon this cheering fact. We are not doomed to disappointment, and destined to awake from our dream of security to find that evil has an everlasting lease upon this universe which God can never break. The eternal years will only show in clearer light the perpetual power of truth, the vanquishing might of righteousness. Men have watched the trend of human life long enough to note its direction; and the verdict of experience agrees with the prophecy of revelation, that the movement is upward and onward "through suffering to the stars."

Welcome, then, all the light and all the knowledge which can enlarge and purify human life, make man a better child of God, and a more dutiful brother. And if it must be that old forms of speech and old views of truth pass away, why let them go without a sigh. But remember that amid all that loss, some things must remain. Whatever is shaken, some truth abides forever. Cling to the simple faith of Christian hearts. Believe in God, in Christ, in the blessedness of doing right, in the eternal triumph of goodness. These things are settled. They are written into the very fibre of matter and the constitution of mind. No storm of discussion can sweep them away. No drought of spiritual death can parch their roots. No earthquake of doubt can unsettle their foundations. They are the very truth of God. And that is immutable.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF OPTIMISM.

Acts xxvii. 22-26. — "And now I exhort you to be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of life among you, but only of the ship. For there stood by me this night an angel of the God whose I am, whom also I serve, saying, 'Fear not, Paul; thou must stand before Cæsar! and lo, God hath granted thee all them that sail with thee.' Wherefore, sirs, be of good cheer: for I believe God, that it shall be even so, as it hath been spoken unto me. Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island." (R. V.)

AFTER such words as those, spoken to men who were driving before a Mediterranean gale, hungry, worn, and distressed, I suppose Paul may be safely pronounced an optimist. That was an instance of persistent looking on the bright side. There was nothing in his surroundings to give him or his companions any heart whatever. Their ship had been seriously used by the storm. Part of her cargo and tackle had been thrown overboard. Her company had been long without food. The storm seemed unabated, and their reckoning was lost. In this plight the confidence of Paul, and his obstinate refusal to be daunted, are evidences of a marvellously hopeful mind. Even a vision of angels, such as reassured him, would hardly have been enough, under the cir-

cumstances, to allay the fears and doubts of some men. But Paul's faith was the basis of his hope. He was cheerful because he had implicit trust in his God. His optimism was of that deep and worthy sort which rests, not on a sanguine temperament, nor prosperous surroundings, but on the certainty and goodness of that divine purpose which runs through all the creation.

You will notice, too, that it was an open-eyed optimism, not resting on ignorance, or short-sightedness, or stupidity. Paul looked on the bright side in spite of the dangers around and ahead. "Wherefore, sirs," he says, "be of good cheer;" yet in the very next breath adds this discomfiting prediction, "Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island." That was a most matter-of-fact cheerfulness. It was not blind to present difficulties, hardships, or disaster. It simply rose above them all in the strength of a faith superior to their depressions and discouragements. Paul foresaw the trials in store for this storm-beaten party. He realized their dangers. He fully measured their difficulties. Nevertheless, he could say, "Be of good cheer." At a very dangerous moment, and with clear prescience of more serious trials still to come, Paul's word was one of trust. He looked on the bright side.

We may safely take his optimism as a pattern for our own. It was exemplary. It was rightly rooted and rightly qualified. And it suggests to us the right and the wrong kind of optimism, its use and its abuse. For I hold that every Christian is in

duty bound to be an optimist; to look on the bright side, to believe in the triumph of the best, to be of good cheer. That is the essence of our religion. Christianity has been from the very beginning the religion of cheerfulness. It was announced as the message of glad tidings. It was preached as good news. It teaches, above all things, the right and the duty to be joyful. And I do not see how any man can be a true Christian and look on the dark side; be full of glooms and fears and terrors; live in apprehension, and die in alarm. If God rules, and if God is love, there is no danger that the universe will get off the track, or any soul in it miss its true destiny. Neither can any of life's disasters fatally hurt us. You may get a warrant for your fears and for your timidities elsewhere, but you will never get it in your Christianity. For that everywhere bids men be of good cheer; rejoice evermore; be glad in the Lord; be not afraid. And our despondencies are ill-assorted with the cheering progress of the race. Our timidity does not agree with the character we assign to the Lord. Our dull complaints ignore the goodness which we believe God manifests to us and to all his children. One of two things every consistent man must do. He must renounce either his Christianity or his despondency. He cannot look on the dark side and on the Christian side at the same time. If he yields himself to his unhappy tempers, his moody glooms, he does so against the protest of all his Christian faith. You can find no warrant for pessimism between the lids of the New Testament.

The Christian view of life, therefore, enjoins upon us the duty of hopefulness, cheerfulness, the anticipation of good. In our personal lives, in our expectation of the world's future, we are committed, as Christians, to believe in the best and brightest, to cultivate a steadfast cheerfulness, to cherish an unalterable courage. We find the pattern of our disposition in the words of Paul, "Now I exhort you to be of good cheer."

But while we should cultivate an optimism of this sort as the very substance of our religion, we ought to take good care that it is seasoned with common-sense. There is very little good in a cheerfulness which is blind to danger, insensible to difficulties, and ignorant of the obstacles and delays to success. One easily gets out of patience with that bland and obtuse hopefulness which smiles in the face of danger, and makes no effort against the peril it does not realize. There are people who will face the most tremendous crises, and go out to meet the most serious difficulties, with perfect serenity, because they do not realize what is threatening. I used to have a neighbor who would come out of his house in the morning when the wind was drawing in from the east, and the rainy clouds were all over the sky, and smilingly predict a pleasant day perhaps five minutes before the storm would break. He was an optimist, but a very foolish one, because his amiable desire to look on the bright side led him to shut his eyes to facts which were staring him in the face. And so I would urge that while it is a Christian virtue to look on the

bright side, we are never justified in letting this disposition or principle lead us to underrate real difficulties or dangers. We must remember that while the results of God's providential purpose in this world are not doubtful, but certain to be for the best, the process of teaching those results depends upon human wisdom, human courage, and human faithfulness. And no amount of hopefulness as to the results should cause us to lose sight of the means of attaining them, the toil, the care, the patience, the wisdom, needful to circumvent difficulty and avert peril.

Yesterday there sailed from yonder port a stanch, well-appointed steamship, bound for England. She is well-built, well-officered, well-manned. Her commander is a thorough seaman, and knows the ability of his ship. He has every reason to expect a safe and prosperous voyage. But it never will do for him to forget that the ability of his vessel and his crew to cope with all the perils to navigation does not lessen the reality of those perils by so much as a hair. They are real, imminent, continuous. The price of safety on the high seas is constant vigilance. It would be folly for the commander, because he knows his ship is stanch, to throw off all responsibility, laugh and joke with the passengers, leave the vessel to sail herself, and trust to luck for a safe run to Queenstown. Every moment of the time that ship is watched as carefully as if every moment were critical with her. From stem to stern, and from bridge to stoke-hole, she is under incessant surveillance. Her commander knows he has a stout ship,

and so he has no fears. But he knows that a stout ship carelessly handled will be no better than a weak one. And he will not allow his confidence in his vessel to abate one jot from his vigilance and care. He will still maintain all his respect for North Atlantic fogs, and will be just as much on his guard against vagrant icebergs.

Now, there is a lesson here for us all who are proud of our optimism, and who love to see the world all sunshine and smiles. The fact that creation is sure to be a success, and society regenerated at last, does not in the least abate the dangers which threaten, through which, and by overcoming which, we are to be saved. They are none the less real because they are temporary. The conflict they will involve is none the less bitter because it will give victory to the right. The perils, for instance, which gather around the immediate future of our own nation lose none of their seriousness because we so confidently believe in the ability of the times to cope with them. We are doubtless as well able to take care of the problems laid upon our minds and hearts as our forefathers were to decide the question of national liberty, or our brothers the problem of negro slavery. But remember, after all, we shall have to take care of our problems in the same way, with toil and thought, with anxious vigilance and patient planning. And let us not underrate their serious meaning to us and our age, because of our sanguine faith that they will be satisfactorily solved and cast out of our way at last. Remember that Paul, though he

foresaw the happy issue of his perilous Mediterranean voyage, confessed to his fellow-voyagers that they must first pass through the sufferings of shipwreck. "Howbeit we must be cast upon a certain island."

It is sometimes laid to the charge of those of us who believe in the final overthrow of evil, that we are so easily confident of this divine consummation that we overlook the seriousness of the conflict which is waging with it, and come to think lightly of the nature of sin. It is true that some teachers of the liberal faith have done this. They have glozed the enormity of sin, and treated moral transgression as a venial affair. They have argued, with a shallow optimism, that things are not so very bad as they seem, that they are constantly improving, that by and by they will all be right, and so have taught men to think and speak slightly of sin, as if it were a mere incident in life, and not a very serious one at that. But this is not a wise optimism. For no future hope for man, no prospect of the final overthrow of evil, can ever make sin one whit less vile, or its consequences less serious and blighting to human souls. No man makes light of a fever, or of the rheumatism, or of the small-pox, because they are curable diseases. And why should men "make a mock at sin" when they have come to believe in the salvability of the whole human race? The joy of that sinless future does not lessen the woes of this sin-laden present. The distant morning of salvation is fair in its first faint appearings. But the dreary darkness of human sinfulness still gathers heavily

around men's souls. And before we can catch those triumphant strains which shall signalize the victory of the Son of God, we are destined to hear the war-cry on many a fierce field where evil men oppose the good, and righteousness contends inch by inch for the mastery of the earth. It is poor military judgment to underrate the strength of your foe. It is bad navigation to misjudge the nature of your soundings, or the violence of the squall. It is a poor kind of optimism which surveys the battle-field of the moral forces of the age, where mighty legions are marshalling for colossal conflicts, and prophesies that there is not going to be much of a fight after all. I thank God every day of my life that from my childhood I have been taught to look on the bright side, and believe in the final victory of all that is best and purest and holiest. But I have equal reason for gratitude that I never learned that it was an essential element of this cheerful faith to underrate the seriousness of the evils whose overthrow must precede that glorious victory. It makes a man a better soldier in the army of the Lord to feel an unbounded assurance that he is on the side which is destined to win an unqualified victory. But he is a wiser and more useful fighter if he realizes the character and the resources of the enemy.

But there is another caution which the man or woman of cheerful and easy-going nature must observe as a check upon the over-sanguine hopes which temperament begets. It is very easy to expect too much from special forms of attack upon social evils.

It is easy to underestimate the vast obtuseness, or inertness, or depravity of men. It is very common in young people, full of the fresh and honest moral enthusiasms of youthful life, and brimming with courage, to engage in the crusade against the shams and the evils of society, to start in their schemes of ameliorating the condition of the burdened and groaning creation, in the hope of accomplishing their aim in short order. You meet the young preacher to-day, and he is full of special and patent methods for reaching the deadly sins of life, and of converting the deadly sinners. He knows his own earnestness, he believes in the strength of a good cause, he trusts in the power of Heaven to help him, and he thinks the victory will be speedy and grand. You meet him ten years later, and you find him a different man. He is more modest in his expectations. He has learned what a slow-going world this is. He has discovered the power of old habits, of deep-seated prejudices, of hereditary appetites, and morbid passions. His hopes are disappointed; possibly he himself is saddened. He has measured his strength against that of the world, and has found that regeneration is not wrought by any patent process, nor in fits of zeal, nor in flank-movements on the enemy's lines. It comes of hard, patient toil, the added efforts of thousands and millions of hearts, the fragrant sacrifices of whole generations.

You will sometimes hear nervous and active men and women commenting on the deliberate and sluggish way in which the day laborer digs with pick and

shovel in the trenches along the street. They criticise the lazy style of his work, and would like to spur him up and make him hurry. But the man with the shovel is not so lazy after all. He has simply begun work at a pace which he can keep up all the day long. Just let his dapper critics take the tools, and begin at the lively rate they would like to see him taking, and long before the sun is at the zenith, they will be wilted in their half-dug trenches. The fact is, the laborer has measured the resistance of the solid earth to his most vigorous efforts. He knows how stubborn it is. And he gauges his working-pace to the resistance he meets, and learns not to expect too much.

It would be well if some of our ardent reformers, some devoted Christians even, would take this lesson to heart. There is no use in beginning a religious or a reform movement at a pace that must be slackened in a month. And it is neither wholesome nor wise to raise the hopes of the sanguine to the pitch of expecting immediate and decisive results in matters which cannot yield them except to long continued toil. We may recall the earnestness and power which were put into the reform-club movement when those organizations were first formed to reclaim the intemperate and war upon the rumseller. Doubtless they were of great service, and helped the good cause along. But they never began to do all that was expected of them by the sanguine hearts who first fell into line to found them. I well remember the stir that was made by a reform club in my own

neighborhood. It was a phenomenon. We brought together a score of old drinkers, and got their signatures, and started them in the new way. And hopeful people were all ablaze with enthusiasm, and prophesied great results, and felt that the secret of true and permanent temperance reform had been discovered. But they were disappointed. The advantage gained was not nearly what was expected. The truth was, the real strength of the ancient evil had not been half appreciated, nor its power of resistance well calculated. And this enthusiasm was, after all, only a single wave in the slowly rising tide of reform, and could not of itself float inebrates into a temperate life, any more than one breaker can lift a stranded vessel from a sand-bar.

Now that I am urging the moderation of human hopes by reason and good sense, let me refer to a third way in which the sanguine are often disappointed, and find their optimism brought to grief. It is in confusing present results with God's final purposes. There is a sort of short-range faith, common among religious people, which prays at night, and then judges God according to the answer which comes before breakfast. Men confound the slowly maturing purposes of God with the incidents of this day or this week. And many a scoff is levelled at the optimist, and taken to heart by him, because it is not remembered that while God moves surely he moves slowly in his works. Looking on the bright side does not of necessity mean expecting uniform prosperity or success. Paul was of good cheer when

he thought of the final issue of that tempestuous voyage. But his immediate expectation was of shipwreck. If his had been a weak and shallow optimism, it might have been disconcerted by that impending trial; for there are many minds that can see no justification for optimism, in the face of any evil whatsoever. The slightest dash of trouble upsets their faith in the divine goodness; nor can they discern "the soul of goodness in things evil," even when they are assured that the evil is but temporary. But any man who is determined by his convictions to look on the bright side must be prepared to do it in spite of present ills and transient trials. It is God's good purpose to make us perfect through suffering. And we must accept the present evils, so as not to make them a bar to our good cheer. For we cannot measure God's intent by the present, the immediate issue of our labors. Our God is leisurely in his methods, and toils with the certainty and with the deliberation of one who knows his omnipotence. There is a tireless constancy in his work which shames our spasmodic heats. We lie down at night and think the Lord has forgotten his creation. But even as we sleep he is pressing it forward. We wake with the day, and in the clash of worldly noise we lose the sound of his engines. But still they whirl and grind and labor. Year after year we may scan the fields of life, always to find the movements going on which show that God is working. If our knowledge could cover a century we should find the agents of God, never stopping for breath, restless, sleepless, tireless,

strong, indefatigable, as fresh as they were when the morning of the creation dawned. Out of such deliberate toil results come slowly, and that is a poor sort of Christianity which gets discouraged because the harvests of heaven are so slow in ripening.

Let the man who is looking for the bright side of things remember that he must lift his eyes beyond the horizon of this present, beyond the immediate outcome of earthly labor, if he would justify his optimism. We must not judge God upon too narrow evidence, but bear in mind that he who has all eternity in which to perfect his wise designs, can afford not to hurry.

It would be a sad perversion of the truth, if, with the growth of the spirit of hope and good cheer which properly and naturally flows from Christianity, we were to grow indolent too, and careless and inert in the face of the real difficulties and trials of life. For the logical basis of our trust is that the love of God, working in the hearts of men, will stir them to more and more activity. So we have no right to expect good to come except through toil, trials, and denials. I cannot see where the doctrines of the Liberal wing of Christendom have ever abated a jot or a tittle of the enthusiasm of men and women for Christian work. A noted Orthodox divine, thinking to alarm his fellow Christians over the spread of heresy at Andover, once asked with a sneer, "Where are the Universalist missions?" and seemed to think the case made out against the church that bears the tidings of genuine good cheer to men. It was a shallow fling. I know

no body of men and women more willing and eager to work for their fellow-men than these same believers in the final victory of good over evil. The missions of the Universalist Church are just where the missions of the Congregational Church were seventy-five years ago. Nay, let me say, every Universalist church is itself the outgrowth of the missionary spirit which made men willing to sacrifice grandly for the sake of carrying a blessed light to them that sit in darkness. Still more than that, if any one seeks evidences of the missionary work of Universalism, let him look over the history of the first three centuries of the Christian Church, and there, where the spirit of Universalism was most prevalent, where it was the prevailing faith, witness the growth and effectual labors of the church, put forth and finding fruition in the conversion of the Roman Empire from paganism to Christianity. That is the true effect of this cheerful optimism which Christianity fosters when it is rightly qualified and balanced. It does not lull into indolence, but stimulates to activity. It does not "cut the cord of missionary effort," but thrills it with a new strength. It does not minimize the evils which man has to overcome, but only rates them at their true value. It calls men to be of good cheer, but it also bids them to be ready to "toil terribly."

THE CHRIST IN THE CREATION.

1 PET. i. 20. — "Who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake." (R. V.)

THE creation of the world, as modern thought conceives it, is a process, not an act. It is a process still present and in progress, not an act in the past tense. It is a process which has kept and still keeps the Divine Power in perpetual exercise. We have only to go to the seashore to see the same works in progress as made the old red sandstone. A thousand rivers still cut their way through bluffs and over lowlands, and great glaciers here and there grind down the surface of vast territories. The agencies of climate, tides, volcanoes, earthquakes, ice, and the terrestrial motions, are still working mutations of the same sort as we see recorded in the long cycles of geologic history. Nothing is at rest in the creation. God is as busy to-day as he ever has been; his hand is as close to his creation; his power is in as active exercise. In the shaping of the earth, not less than in the march of races, the

Creator is still and forever present, active, manifesting new phases of his power and of his purpose.

In this ceaseless toil of the Creator, and in the interminable changes of his creation, it is the privilege of our day to see the unmistakable signs of progress. Judged by the highest standards of our human intelligence, these changes in the creation are seen to have definite direction. There is more than motion; there is motion toward an end, and that end the increasing reign of good, the prevalence of higher over lower, of better over worse, of the enduring over the transient. There is the development of a systematic order, the gradual ascent of life. We may trace the fact, however we may find ourselves at fault about the process. Each age surpasses its predecessor. Each new form of life improves upon the old. And last of all, in the process of time, comes man, the culminating type of the physical creation, in whom, indeed, the physical passes over into the spiritual.

There is no need to rehearse this familiar scheme, the commonplace of our thought, and the foundation of all our theories of life. I simply state its well-known postulates, that I may remind you of one or two important inferences which must be made from these truths.

1. If we believe in the development of the creation, we must, of course, believe in its *continuity*. If it is a slowly unfolding system, then its parts must be related. There must be a continuous line of connection running through them, from the lowest up to

the highest. If the highest and the latest run backward to find their origin, then in the lowest and the lowliest we shall find some prophecy, some forethought, some adaptation, looking toward that which is yet to come. That is to say, we find in the creation a continuity which indicates nothing short of *purpose*. And as we study its earlier features, we must not be surprised if we find in their incompleteness some forecast of what is to come and fulfil their lack. The root foretells the leaf and the branch. The foundations point upward to the capstone. And so, too, the lower types of life all tend toward a culmination in humanity. As a distinguished scientific writer has phrased it: "The creation of man is still the goal toward which nature tended from the beginning." "The whole creation has been groaning and travailing together in order to bring forth that last specimen of God's handiwork,—the Human Soul." Is there nothing in that thought which throws a new meaning into the first words of our text, and connects the advent of the spiritual man, in the person of Jesus Christ, with all the earlier and preliminary stages of creation?—"Who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world." If the appearance of the Christ be part of God's great plan, then it follows by the law of continuity that every step and phase of creation's development had him full in view, from the very earliest, yea, "from the *foundation* of the world!"

2. Another corollary to this law of development is the almost equally striking law of reserve. The

highest things in creation are held in store. They are not lavished in haste. They who would see them must abide the fulness of time. Something is ever withheld from the earlier day that will be revealed and conferred in the later. Not because God favors one generation more than another, but because the law of progressive development imposes this necessity. All things cannot be given at once. Some things must wait. This later earth, in all its fertility, was not given to the primitive man. Because there must be some to lay the deeper courses of human life, down in the dim ages of earth's morning twilight. The full truth about God was not given to humanity in its youth; and Christ was only manifested, as the text says, "at the end of the times."

This truth, this universal law of mental and of spiritual life, ought to be a sufficient answer to those who cannot reconcile the thought of God's universal goodness, with the fact that he manifests that goodness in developing gradations through special souls and particular races, withholding from some what he confers upon others, delaying the benefits for which the early generations long and wait, till some later day. This is the law which is especially manifest in revelation; where, indeed, it is asserted and reasserted with peculiar care. But it is no truer there than it is in every department of man's varied life. All his thought, and all his unfolding relations to the world he possesses, show this invariable principle. The early Greek does not have the sense of beauty which makes his descendants the artists of the world. The man of

the seventh century knows nothing of that freedom and security under law which are reserved for his posterity in the nineteenth. Abraham sees less than Paul. Scythia does not share the privilege of England. Africa is placed in the very rear of the marching nations. Nor could any other principle be expected in a world where the law of progress and development obtained. The law is beautifully and accurately stated in the Epistle to the Hebrews, where the writer says: "All these, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promises, God having provided some better thing for us, *that they without us might not be made perfect.*" The glories of the noon cannot come in the morning twilight. The strength of manhood cannot rest on the shoulders of the child. Every life must move slowly to its own maturity and culmination. And when that climax comes, and the highest life is revealed, all earlier, lesser, imperfect life becomes full of a radiant meaning, revealed now in the light of the perfected purpose it served.

And so humanity finds its culmination in Jesus Christ. And it finds this culmination not in any merely nominal and accidental fashion. We are not to consider him as a being who has won, by a chance use of circumstances, a fortuitous prominence among men. He is the head of the human race not by virtue of meritorious conduct, as if he had been promoted in return for good behavior. We look on him as the head of our race, by virtue of that divine plan which the apostle declared has been

pursued from the beginning, in whose continuity there has been no break, whose progress has had one constant direction, and that an upward and aspiring movement. He is not the model, by virtue of good conduct; he is the type, by virtue of inborn nature. He comes to humanity as the first-born of its new men, its spiritual men. He is the new Adam in the same sense that the first man who ever bore these familiar features, and manifested the will, the consciousness, and the faculties which have ever since distinguished the human family from every other, was the first Adam.

For, according to any theory of the creation, whether it be that of the latest science or of the oldest theology, somewhere along the line of life man began to be. There was a time when no such being as man existed. The earth knew not his like. He was not, and he came to be. And whoever the first being was in whom the traits of our humanity appeared, he was the type, as he was the physical ancestor, of all the rest. This first man, this Adam, embodied and begot our human nature. In him it first appeared; through him it was transmitted to posterity. No matter how the dispute shall be settled between the warring theories as to man's first parent in the flesh, one thing is certain: he had such a progenitor, through whom he has received the characteristics of his humanity.

Now, we do not say of the first man that he is the "model man" in physical and mental life. We do not lay much stress on the fact that we are to eat as

he ate, sleep as he slept, articulate, walk, see, or hear as he did. For in these matters, back of all conscious and voluntary action, lies the nature which the Creator gave to him, which we inherit through him. And so we call him rather the "type," the original from whom our physical life is derived. And though each one of us in one sense receives his physical life fresh from the hands of God, in another and perfectly legitimate way we may speak of our life as conformed to the physical natures we received through our first parent. We are made in his image physically. He is the first-born of every creature, according to the flesh. And as we stand at this late point in the creation, and the long procession of life unfolds itself before our eyes, we can see, without any undue strain upon our thought, a high and mysterious power, in whose presence we must stand with hearts abashed and awestruck, moulding the successive forms of life into higher and nobler types, in whose succession, and by whose slow gradations, we can discern the way steadily opening for the advent of humanity. Nor is it too much to say, when the first human being steps upon the stage of life, that all the lines of this great drama have been written with him in view; all its scenery arranged to culminate in his appearance. It is scarcely an excessive paraphrase of the text to say that man himself "was foreknown indeed from the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times."

But the creation does not end in or with the evolution of the physical man, or with man as he lives the

life of the senses and the lower passions. It is destined to touch a higher mark, even on this earth. There is in the progress we mark by our studies in history and anthropology, an evident gain in moral life. Man tends constantly to a life of spirituality. His senses lose their absolute sway. His lower affections weaken. His reason, his conscience, his unselfish sentiments, acquire larger control over him. Everything in his past points to a time when he will be a nobler, a more unselfish, more spiritually minded creature; just as the steady rise in the quality of animal life in the lower orders may be read as a prediction of the coming time when animal life shall have a worthier representative than the tiger or the ape. But still, as we scan the horizons of the elder world we find no sign of any soul who might be justly called the type of this new life. Humanity cries out for such an one. The elements of a new life seem organizing. The years grow more and more pregnant with the signs that a higher life is approaching humanity. And at last the marvellous day arrives. A man is born into human life unlike any of his predecessors. He is as much an anomaly as the man Adam among the dumb creatures which till his time had tenanted the earth. He is as much of a surprise in history as the first individual in the class of primates, in whom thought and consciousness and conscience had their birth. The birth of Jesus of Nazareth is as marked an event in the course of history as the creation of man. For in him man is re-created. He is the first of the new men, the

men of the spirit, the race which is to carry on the line of evolution and of progress. In him we see a new influx of divine creative power, as real and as marked as that which occurred when this earth was flung off from the cooling nebula, or when Adam was created the first of the human race. Through him the divine life of God came to our race, just as conscience and consciousness came to us by and through the first man, Adam. I just as truly believe in Jesus Christ as our progenitor in the higher life of the spirit, as I believe in the first creative man as my ancestor in the body. Through the one I am what I am physically. Through the other I am what I am spiritually. True, my spiritual life is of God. It is the constant indwelling of the divine nature and love in my heart. Cut off from God it could not endure for an instant. But so is my physical life the constant gift of the Creator and Preserver of being. Were not my body sustained by that vital energy whose mysterious sources lie high up among the hills of the everlasting life, it must vanish in a moment. But the characteristics of that body come to me by inheritance from the first Adam. There is a historic connection between my bodily life and his; and all these members are living witnesses of one who lived in a like body, far back in the dim twilight at the dawn of history.

Even so are my spiritual life, and yours, and humanity's, derived from the life of that Divine Soul who is "the first-born of every creature." It pleased God to send us spiritual life in its divinest form, just as he sent us physical life in its human shape by the

person of a man. That man was Jesus, called the Christ. We are what we are because he was *what* he was, and what God created him to be, as Paul says, "the first-born among many brethren." A new type of life was begun with his advent, a life as different from the elder forms of human existence and activity as man's life was better than that of the beasts of the field. It is a life which unfolds as slowly as man's physical life has grown. And it is a life whose energies can be traced as truly to the life of Jesus as your pedigree and mine can be run back to Adam. For as new centuries roll past, and this soul-life of the human race unfolds with the lapse of time, the men of the future will see more and more valid reasons for this reference of the better life in human hearts to Jesus Christ. It was not without reason that men began a new era in time with the birth of our Lord. For with him begins a new epoch in the evolution of life.

What else than this is the teaching of Paul in the lucid statement he makes in his letter to Corinth, a statement which anticipates Darwin and Spencer by 1800 years? "The first man Adam," he declares, "became a living soul. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit." Is not that the very germ of our doctrine of the relation of Jesus to the living creation? "Howbeit," — and mark how easily these sentences fit into any large and profound scheme of evolution, — "Howbeit, that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the

earth, earthy ;" the second man is of heaven. These are not sentences of contrast so much as they are sentences of continuity. They trace the lineal connection, the progressive relation of body and soul, the man after the flesh, and the man after the spirit. They are the key to all that higher progress which has led man up from lower life and lower aims to a condition in which the soul begins to rule the body ; a progress which shall not cease until man ends where Jesus Christ began, in a disposition of perfect obedience and love toward God. Truly this is a thought which sheds a new glory upon the page of life, and helps us read many a hard passage in the word of God. It is the prophecy of the reconciliation which men are always hoping for, and which by and by will come, between religion and science, when we shall see the fine and far-reaching truth in Ten-nyson's lines : —

"Our little systems have their day,
They have their day and cease to be ;
They are but broken lights of Thee,
And Thou, O Lord, art more than they."

If, now, this be the true meaning of our text, and if Jesus Christ does indeed stand in this relation to human life and human history, mark what a help we have out of many of the most perplexing features of theology and of spiritual truth.

I. See how natural becomes the whole process of salvation, and of the incarnation of the Son of God. If it be true that Jesus "was indeed foreknown be-

fore the foundation of the world," and is "the first-born of every creature," the type and beginning of the new manhood, then he enters into the course of nature, not as an intruder, unrelated to the system of nature and of human life, thrown as it were into an unexpected breach in the divine plan, but as a necessary and natural figure in the unfolding course of the divine plan. He takes his place as the first in that new line of evolution which starts at the point where the soul begins its superselfish existence, its life of free obedience to divine law. The nature of the Christ gains immeasurably when we place him where he should stand, not apart from all this scheme of things in which humanity is working out its salvation and its glory. Accept the ordinary teachings of theology, and Jesus is only the afterthought of God, a nature created to remedy the ravages of sin. He has no organic relation to our race nor to its normal life. He is only a reserve force of the Almighty, summoned to bridge over an emergency. Adopt the thought of St. Paul, and you see in him an element in creation as natural as the sun, the air, as man himself. There is no wrench, no sudden swerving from the direct line of creation's slow development, when we come to Christ. Nay, but on his heart life is carried on and up, and is borne into that realm in which dwell the purely spiritual forces of the Creator, working not for time, but for eternity.

II. Still further, this view of our Lord's place in the creation makes his office a higher one than that

of an Exemplar. He who sees in the Christ only a model set for our imitation loses all appreciation of his most vital relation to our souls. He serves us most, not by the example he sets us, but by the life with which he quickens us, a life which we receive by the Spirit he has introduced into this world, for which we are as truly indebted to him as we are to the man who first gave our race the mighty boon of fire. He blesses humanity most, not in his likeness to it, but in his unlikeness, his measureless supremacy. For out of his higher life we derive life. In him, and through him, we live anew. But without him we can do nothing. Not as imitators of his deeds, but as the children of his Spirit, do we receive the full powers of his blessed life. And never till this world is thus touched and awakened to the higher spirit of life can we hope for that millennial reign promised of old and prayed for all through the ages. When the brightness of that morning shall have dawned upon us, we shall know, as we cannot now, how truly it came to us through the living Spirit of Jesus the Christ.

THE CITY THAT IS TO COME.

HEB. xiii. 14. — "For here we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come."

It is possible for us to conceive of the life that is to come only in symbols furnished out of the life that now is. The intimations given us in revelation of what awaits us there are slight and vague. The only shape in which these become at all serviceable to us is when they are clothed and embodied in the forms which our senses have made familiar to us. Among all these symbols, none better presents the realities of the future life to our earthly minds than the figure of a city, because that idea embodies in itself so many types of the best activities and most coveted conditions of the soul. A city stands for the highest works of man's mind at its best estate. It represents that permanence of abode which brings a sense of security and of continuity in life. At the same time it suggests all the change of scene and the diversified contacts which supply stimulus to the various faculties. A city is the means of those multiplied companionships which foster the sense of

brotherhood and feed the social hunger. Its crowding dwellings and the multitudes which throng its streets are a sign of the society which man's soul seeks as it develops, the desire for which drives him from savage solitudes to the company of beings like himself. A city is a place where architecture endows man's home with a grandeur or a beauty second only to that which shines on him from the works of nature. Within its limits are assembled the works of art and the products of industry which his hand and brain have wrought. Its marts, its schools, its halls of justice and of legislature, are witnesses of the best and most enduring works of his intellect. Its churches express a worship which reaches after the highest power and spirit of life. In the populous and prosperous city we have a symbol of the things man loves most, seeks most, finds most congenial to his hopes. It concentrates the ideas which dominate his mind. In selecting it, therefore, to represent the condition of our souls in the future, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews has chosen a pregnant figure. It carries the mind forward into a state of existence which, by implication, is prefigured and suggested in the peculiarities of the present. The soul is glad of even a hint of an analogy between the seen and the unseen. It would fain wring from the silence of nature some sign of the invisible for which nature stands as an interpreter. And this craving makes it hail the clear promises of revelation, which go far enough at least to comfort the soul, and give it a suggestion of what cannot be told in the human

tongue. To know, therefore, that the present life is a transient foreshadowing of an eternal condition, is a deep and holy satisfaction. To be told that in place of the fleeting cities which are but tents in our march through this world, we are to have a continuing city on high, is a message whose import every heart can understand, a blessing and a reassurance to our souls.

But while we are permitted to look forward, beyond the limits of our earthly life, for fuller and more satisfying conditions, we are not left at liberty to scorn this present life. God made this world. He made the life which roots itself in matter. He made it as the preparation for the life of pure spirit. And so he made a life we have no right to despise. They who affect to scorn and hate this present world and all its life, if they are not hypocritical, are at least seriously irreverent. For both are from the same hand. He who made the spirit, made the body in which it dwells. He who made the invisible things that endure, made also the visible which pass away. The brain is God's handiwork as well as the mind which animates it; the hand as truly as the intellect which guides it. That is a fatally defective philosophy which, like one so popular to-day, finds it necessary to belittle and to cast reproach upon matter, in order to exalt the place of mind and of spirit. It forgets that God created both the heavens and the earth. It ignores the truth that these bodies may be "a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God." It belittles, if it does not deny, the fact that he who gives the spiritual body,

gives us also the "natural" body, and that one is just as "real" as the other. There is a great deal of current thinking which is as dangerous and as misleading as any of the ancient heresies which darkened men's minds into a belief in the essential evil of matter. It is not to be wondered at that people are recoiling from the rank materialism of the last ten years; nor is it strange that the reaction should beget some vagaries and errors. But one need not be a materialist to believe in the reality of matter, in its essential usefulness and holiness, in the necessity of its existence, and in its influence over mind. And above all it will be found dangerous in the end to misrepresent the functions of this world of matter, or the relation it sustains to the divine will and being.

For without doubt this visible world is all a part of the divine thought and fabric. The whole universe is the changing thought of God. He drew the curves which bound this sphere on which we dwell. He projected the majestic lines which mark its orbit and track the progress of the planets through the skies. It was he who framed the animate creation, shaping all those forms and devising those mechanisms which appear in their beauty and their usefulness only to the studious eye. These wondrous fabrications in external nature, which it is the proudest achievement of thought to unravel, are a web knit up by the divine mind. Take a microscope and study the strict and delicate patterns, the geometric exactness, the exquisite beauty, of the minutest visible forms. These are the fine fabric from his fingers.

Turn your telescope on the stars, as their vast magnitudes move through such far-reaching courses, always exact to the fraction of a second in the times of their going and coming. These are the issue of the heavenly thought and will. These are the work of the Almighty God in the world of matter. Let no man call it a "vile" world on which the divine thought has been thus lavished. The transparent blue of the dome where the sun blazes at noon; the flying cloud that speeds across its spaces; the shadow of the cloud upon the mountain; the brook that leaps from the hillside, and the broad river, bathing the rushes and the flowers of the valley; the ocean roaring all day in its hollow caves; all these are expressions of the mind one meets at every turn in the world of matter and external forms, a mind delighting in beauty, moving always in grace and in majesty, clothing its thought with loveliness and its might with grandeur. This universe is God thinking; and he thinks in matter as well as in the more attenuated material of spirit. Indeed, materialism has no refutation for the claim that matter itself may be only a mode of force. It is not unlikely that this may prove to be its true definition, and that matter will be found to be one manifestation of the infinite energy. Be that as it may, that philosophy will always fail which attempts to banish God from the closest and most pervasive share in the outward world. God is not matter, and matter is not God. But this external world, while it is as distinct from the mind of God as the smile on your cheek or the frown on your brow is

distinct and separate from yourself, is nevertheless the manifestation of divine life and creative love. As Wordsworth says, —

“ And I have felt
A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean, and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.”

No less does the mind of God manifest itself in the experience and development of the outward world. The happenings of this life, as we slightly call them, are the conversation of God. History is vocal with the proclamations of his presence and his purposes. A life's biography is the utterance of a thought of God. God governs the world upon a plan. And all the grander features come out in the outlines of history, the details in every man's private biography. He who cannot read a divine message in his own life, he who sees no trace of God in history, may lay the blame upon his own eyes. For Providence is as omnipresent as gravity, as pervasive as the ether itself. The footsteps of the nations are the track by which God has been advancing to his goal. And if the dull earth under our feet be teeming with the signs of God's present life and powers, then a thousand times over is it true that his work and purpose break through all the disguises of

life's incidents, to make him known to his children. The man of faith, from the deck of the bark in which he sails life's sea, may truly say, —

“The winds that o'er my ocean run
Reach through all heavens beyond the sun.
Through life, through death, through fate, through time,
Grand breaths of God, they sweep sublime.”

We cannot pause here to go back of these assumptions, which are true only for those who hold to a belief in God. To an atheist they must be only assumptions. But one cannot forever arrest the progress of his thought over the stumbling-blocks which unbelief throws down. There are some things which ought to be taken for granted in the light of the gospel of Christ. To Christian hearts these are truths resting upon solid reason. And if we accept them they will help us to see God in this present world, in this city which continues not. We shall acknowledge that creation, as it comes to the mind through these senses of ours, is a revelation of God, manifesting him as the body manifests the soul, as the word discloses the thought, as the caress makes known the affection which prompts it.

The effect, then, of the right use of this world and all its experiences is to teach the soul of God. Earth and earthly life are to be the soul's introduction to God. They are the primary lessons in spiritual knowledge. They pave the way for those higher facts to which we shall be introduced when we put off the body. He who uses well the material

in which man works here on earth, is best fitted to understand the new materials in which he will be called to work in the life to come. And any neglect of present opportunities, any slighting of our earthly work, will incur for us the penalties which always fall upon neglect and abuse of opportunity. It is a poor way to spend life, which makes it merely the learning of a few rules of practice that serve only for the days of dwelling in this earth, and includes none of the principles which outlast this world and push forward into that which is to come. The only life in this fleeting city of time which can fit us for the abiding city to come, is a life which lets us into the deeper realities of being, and the truths and principles which never change.

This primary fact in the faith we hold as Christians conveys the strongest presumption that when we are done with this life, and pass from this city which continues not to that which is to come, we shall be ushered into surroundings not altogether unfamiliar. The truth that both the material and the spiritual worlds are the work of one mind, leads us naturally to expect that the conditions of the life to come will be not wholly unlike the life from which we go. If we had grounds for believing that this world were made by one God, and the world unseen were made by another, we might expect that the transition from world to world would bring a pang of lonesomeness to our souls, and fill them with homesickness for the dear earth they left behind. But the one powerful, convincing, unchangeable argument for

the continuity of life, the analogy of this life to the life beyond death, the reproduction in the city that is to come of the forms, the types, the ideas, and the relationships of this world, is the unity of God's nature, the unchangeableness of the mind of God. "If I were to construct," says Mr. Munger, "one all-embracing argument for immortality, and were I to put it all into one word, it would be — *God*." And so, to paraphrase that pregnant sentence, if we were to construct one comprehensive argument for the faith that the future will be no strange, unfamiliar state, in which our souls shall wander like solitaries in a land of aliens, it, too, should be summed up in the one word — God! If any man asks me why I believe in the persistence of personal identity, in the recognition of friends, in the repetition of a scenery or an environment which will make the future a congenial home to these sensitive souls of ours, I answer always in that one word — God! I dare not base my faith on the yearnings of the human heart, for our desires often mislead and deceive us. I dare not rest upon the analogies of this present life, for we may select the wrong ones, and confuse ourselves out of our own ignorance. I find no satisfaction in the messages which claim to be spoken back from the departed, for these are nearly always words which savor of this world, and tell us nothing we have not already inferred. I find no absolute scientific warrant for a belief which so clearly transcends the sphere of science. But I can rest in absolute faith and unshaken serenity upon the nature

and the being of Almighty God, as those discover themselves in his methods here upon earth. God is as true to himself, and as consistent with his own nature, as his sons and daughters are to themselves. He works always in a manner of his own. Everywhere in the creation as it falls under our eyes, we see repetitions, variations, remodellings, of the ways and the shapes which the Divine Creator seems to love, and to love to use again and again. It is one of the marks of human identity that the mind leaves its own peculiar seal upon everything it touches. Every master has a style of his own. The great artists, the painters, the sculptors, the musicians, are distinguished from one another by the styles in which they do their work. Michael Angelo has his method, Titian has his, and Rubens his. You would never mistake a work of Sebastian Bach for one by Frederick Chopin. The Hindu architects built their massive temples in one style, the Egyptians adopted another, and the Greeks a third. You would not attribute the Sphinx to the Italian sculptors, nor the Gothic cathedrals to the rude builders of the Aztec piles. Every work of art or of original design carries the mark of its maker. We recognize the author by his manner. When we see a house with certain peculiarities we say, "Such a one built that;" and the anonymous book almost certainly betrays its hidden author.

So, on the other hand, you know that if your worker is to undertake something new, it will bear some resemblance to what he has already done. The architect's house will show some feature, — a novel

window, a peculiar roof, a porch, a mode of ornamentation, which will suggest some other house of his. If you go to see an artist's pictures, you know they will show some resemblances to works of his you have already seen. Nature takes good care that there shall be no anonymous work done in this universe.

This law is derived from the very nature of God himself. It is because we are made in his image that we love to do things in ways peculiar to ourselves, and to write our signatures on all our works. And so it is only a reversal of the law which traces it back to God's being, and finds it manifesting itself as well in all his handiwork. He works with the same fidelity to his methods. This is the principle which underlies all science, which, indeed, is the basis of science. For science is but the classification of knowledge; and knowledge never could be classified, if it did not find its objects arranging themselves in groups, by similarities, according to established plans. In all the infinite variety of nature, there is, nevertheless, a system, a recurrence of the familiar, a grateful repetition, as if there were some ways peculiarly dear to the Creator's heart which he delights to use again and again. This universe contains but few fundamental types. The innumerable shapes of atoms, crystals, contours of the earth, orbits of the planets, are but variations of a few primitive forms,—the sphere, the cone, the cube. The botanist goes through the woods, the fields, and even drags the bottom of the sea, to fill his herbariums. And when he has pulled his specimens apart, he finds in them all

only a few characteristic forms. He soon assigns them a place in some class, order, or family, in which relationships appear, — likeness of blossom or of leaf, peculiarities of growth, similarities of fruit. He finds common traits in the daisy by the dusty roadside and the harebell that swings in mid-air from the mountain crags, which range them in one class; and he traces relationships of form in the bloom of the apple-trees, the lone beach-plum by the bleak sea, the strawberry, the lowly bramble, and the roses perfuming sunny lanes in midsummer, which group them all together in one family.

The zoölogist has the same story to tell us. He, too, finds the old familiar forms of structure worked over into a multitude of curious and ingenious plans. The lizard and the snake reveal a structure kindred to the tiger in the jungle and the soaring eagle. He finds a prophecy in the fishes of the earliest geologic ages, which are preserved by him only by their fossils, of that bodily structure which is raised to such dignity in the frame of man. The human skeleton is only the skeleton of the pterodactyl or the ichthyosaurus worked over and adapted to modern times. Think for a moment how strikingly this fact finds illustration in the human race itself. The members of our human family are of such various traits that no two of them ever were exactly alike. Yet such a general resemblance appears in us all, that whenever one meets a man he encounters the same passions, the same mental faculties, the same directing will. A man is a man the world over.

But there is a deeper meaning in this universal law than any but the most reverent and far-sighted science puts upon it. Here are the proofs, written in every flower, whispered in every wind, emphasized in every motion of every living creature, that the mind which conceived the universe is one, and that it has the same fondness for beautiful and convenient methods which the human intellect displays. Here is evidence that wherever God puts forth his creative force, he will leave some unmistakable sign of himself. The page of the universe is all in one handwriting. If we were to go to the outermost star in space, we should find things familiar and natural to our senses; just as the explorer, in the wildest jungle of the tropics or the barred coasts of the polar seas, discerns many a plant, and many a living thing, to remind him of those he used to see in his own town, perhaps in his own dooryard. You never can feel like a stranger in any part of this earth. For wherever you may go, God has been there before you — the same God who caused the tender grass to grow beside your doorstep, and who made the moon to shine last night in at your chamber window.

Now, why should we suppose that what we call the spiritual world, the world, that is, which awaits our spirits when once they are emancipated from our bodies, is unlike this natural? Why should we expect everything to be unfamiliar, bewildering, novel? Or why should we think that we are to find nothing there for which our experience here has fitted us? Is there not one God for both worlds — for all

worlds? Hath not the same hand made the heavens and the earth? Must we think that God has forgotten himself and changed his nature in the objects and arrangements of the spiritual world? — that he has become tired of his good and familiar methods? If you were going from our northern latitudes to the shores of India, or to the far-away settlements of New Zealand, you would not feel that you were cutting loose from all your past knowledge, the lessons of your memory, the stock and store of facts and reasoning which have served you here. Or if you could be transported to any one of the planets which keep us company in the ceaseless whirl about the sun, to Jupiter, or remote Neptune, your geometry, your chemistry, your physics, would be just as serviceable to you as ever. You would find the same fundamental principles holding good in the uttermost parts of the creation; because creation is the product of One Hand, and that hand leaves its mark inscribed on every one of its works. By that same sign have we not a right to expect similarities, the repetition of the well-known relations and forms of the visible, when we pass into the unseen world? Can it be possible that the touch of the divine fingers, which has made every corner of this earth seem homelike to the human mind, is never to be seen when we drop these mortal eyes to see with those of pure spirit?

Suppose an angel were to come out of the invisible into this material world. Do you suppose he would feel lost here? Would he find no objects, no solitary

organism, no customs of this earth-world, to remind him of the scenery and beings he had left behind? Or do you suppose that he would discover on every hand fresh tokens that he was in a world created by the same Power that made the realms from which he had strayed away? I cannot believe he would feel lost or lonely. I am sure he would be reminded of the city which abides, in every street and mansion of this which continues not. And so I rest firmly in the faith that when the proceeding is reversed, and the intelligent soul goes forth into the unknown, by the very fact that God is, and that he is the same yesterday and to-day and forever, the same in all worlds and in all systems, that soul will find itself surrounded by the dear familiar forms, the well-known signs of its God and its Father, which have revealed him here and now. "Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?" says the psalmist, "or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in the grave, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me."

In these words you may read the assurance that he who goes from this life goes to no strange city where he shall sigh in his lonesome thoughts for the world he has left, the blessed scenes he no more beholds. Wherever God is, and his works, and the systems and worlds he has brought forth, there you and I, his children, will be at home. It is always home to us

where God is. We shall never feel strange and solitary in any place which we recognize as a mansion in our Father's house. God's ways will always remind us of other ways of his that we have known. There is a deep truth in the doctrine Emmanuel Swedenborg taught concerning correspondences. It is only another way of asserting God's consistency with himself. He who gave us the flowers which bloom in earthly springtimes will give us in that invisible world something of which these blossoms are but a type and pattern. The cloud that drifts across the sunset prefigures a like beauty in the firmament behind the one we see. The solemn chant of the sea as it breaks all day upon its rocks is teaching the ear of him who lies upon the headland, to listen for the wonderful sound of that note made by "the waters that be above the heavens." So, too, the dear faces that beam upon us here, and come to stand so utterly for the spirits they cover that when they pass from our sight we weep as if the very souls of our darlings were gone too—these very masks of mortality are preparing us to recognize, by and by, the invisible and spiritual creatures who wear them.

Let, therefore, the fashion of this world pass away! Let mortality hasten through its brief years! The perishing body, the vanishing scenery of this life, take with them nothing which is not replaced by the same power which made the transient city we abide in for a time. The new things God has in store cannot be altogether unlike the old which have been so dear. That is the pledge of these earthly scenes,

the assurance they give of what is to come. Let love fasten itself as strongly as it will upon the beauty and the grandeur of this transient city, without dread of bereavement in the change which transfers us to other scenes. For —

“Not alone we land upon that shore,
’Twill be as though we had been there before;
We shall meet more we know
Than we can meet below;
And find our rest like some returning dove,
And be at home at once with the Eternal Love.”

WHITE ROBES AND PALM BRANCHES;

OR,

THE VICTORY OF HOLINESS.

REV. vii. 9, 14. — "After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and with palms in their hands. . . . And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb."

THE Revelation of St. John is a magnificent spectacular prophecy. It sets forth great principles in bold and brilliant pictures. It uses the bitter experiences which befell Christian hearts in dreadful persecutions, as the means of showing forth the divine providence and purpose of deliverance. With the blood of present martyrdoms for a symbol, it depicts the struggle and woe of a world at strife. And with the white light shining in the Christian faith, it shows forth the blessed consummation of victory, the triumph of the Christ. It is one of the most stirring of writings. It moves the heart because it is so filled with the pathos and the tragedy of those days of

bloody persecution in which it was written. "Without tears," says Bengel, "it was not written; without tears it cannot be understood." It is a set of dazzling pictures, "Wherein," says Herder, the great poet-theologian, "are set forth the rise, the visible existence, and the general future of Christ's kingdom, in figures and similitudes of his first coming, to terrify and to console."

In the passage which stands as our text, we have one of the glimpses of the victory which in those days of tribulation and anguish must have seemed so very remote and hard to believe. The innumerable throng in white robes, with palms in their hands, wear and bear the symbols of triumph. They stand forth in the din and clash of the contending forces depicted in this book, the happy participants in the glory and the purity of the victorious Lamb. Their white robes mean holiness. Their waving palms mean victory. The two symbols standing together set forth the triumph of holiness. That is the burden of the whole book. It is the glorious message which shines down to us from all those stormy pictures. The victory of the good, the end of strife in the purification of the world — this is the great thought poured out of the heart of that mystic utterance of the beloved apostle. Victory through struggle and tribulation — that is the outcome of the world and the creation, prophesied in this vision of the multitude in white robes.

But the form and suggestions of the vision bring to the mind not alone the victory, but the means

as well. In the very thought of a victory, there is also the thought of a battle. Winning only comes of striving. The creation is to make its way to this victory through struggle. And the same thought which carries the mind to the consummation of toil and suffering carries it back also to the weariness and the pain and the conflict out of which that end has been wrought. "Lo, a great multitude, clothed in white robes, and with palms"—"These are they which have come out of great tribulation." There is a long look ahead in those words. But there is also a long look backward, as they, in one sentence, not only forecast the future, but sum up the past.

For the whole history of this creation is a history of strife. The record goes far back, back, indeed, beyond the dawn of history, farther even than the creation of man. The very beasts of primeval ages on this earth, as if in dismal anticipation of human history, grappled and tore each other on the shores of paleozoic seas, and in the depths of the mammoth forests of the carboniferous age. As far back as we find life we find strife. Strength prevailed over weakness, and that which was fittest for the grapple with the grim earth and its conditions survived in triumph. Little connection indeed there may seem to be between the brutal struggles of competing strength in those dim ages of the earth's infancy, and the victory of goodness seen by the Revelator. But this much binds the two into one great system; these early struggles are manifestations of the one law whose final application includes the human soul in its most

glorious estate. These are the roots of the great law, deep in the dark world of physical existence, whose flowering branches lift their tops to the very heavens. It is the warning of outward nature that as soon as life begins, strife begins too. There is a pathetic significance in the divine provision by which even the dumb brute, dying in his unconsciousness of all higher life and motives, assists at laying the foundations of that process destined to reach through all ages, and come to perfection only with their consummation, by which the highest things and the most worthy victories are achieved, by blood, by sweat, and by travail of soul.

Does the mind demand to know how it is to be with these dumb things that have gone down to silence at the head of this long procession of life, perishing long before there was any intelligent eye to see their suffering, or any being whose moral gain could be subserved by their destruction? It takes a strong head to go back to these days which antedate humanity and not grow dizzy. There is so much there which is full of mystery, and challenges the reason and the moral sense. It seems a hard law which holds these lower types of life to the necessity of struggle and pain unless they, too, shall, somewhere and sometime, know the bliss of victory, and find a compensation for suffering in redemption from its thrall. It is not enough that we say of these that they have entered into the sum-total of life, and given themselves to be "the sweet presence of a good diffused." There they lie on the very first battle-fields

of existence. Shall they still lie unconscious of any good when the race which has carried on their struggle comes home to its triumph? We cannot read the mystery. But there is nothing in reason or in revelation to forbid the belief that somehow these, too, shall enter in some way into the grand and blessed result.

“ That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroyed,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete.”

Come forward in time to the later day to which the thought of victory still carries us back. Now it is no longer the earth covered with monsters and mites that tear one another in their rage, and overcome by talon and tusk. Here is man at last, unmistakably himself even in those primitive days of his ignorance and of his weakness. But here, too, the same law is in force that existence is a struggle. Here is man engaged in conflict with the beasts that were here before him. Here he is struggling with the elements more pitiless than the beasts. Here he grapples with his fellowman in a struggle for existence in which craft matches itself with craft, and strength with strength, to get the scanty food which will keep body and soul together. It seems like a battle without anything heroic or inspiring. It is like the quarrelling of dogs for a bone. Viewed in the light of these latter days, it is a wild carnival of brutality. But if we disengage ourselves from the prepossessions of a morality which applies only to

our own time, and judge those men in relation to their own time and by the light which flickered faintly in their understandings, then shall we find after all, in those crude and brawling struggles, the small beginnings of a better age. Those were battles for the right to live. The chieftain who slew the most foes, in the effort to get for his clan a larger portion of food, was the Cromwell or the Washington of those twilight ages. And if we can look beyond the accidents of the struggle, if we can regard the bloodshed and the cruelty as only incidental, and remember that the chief end of all this repulsive activity is to preserve the life of humanity and give it a chance to grow and to develop, we may see still the connection a little closer, and a little more plainly shown, of these early victories of the strong with that final triumph of the apostle's vision.

Come forward a step more in history, to where men have learned to till the soil and build their cities, and so to need the land, and prize it as a source of subsistence. Now the struggle is for possession of the soil. It is for the fields which stretch away from the home lands. It is for the right to till those home lands without molestation. Still the old battle goes on, and the enjoyment of existence is only bought by strife. But now the aim and motive of the struggle have risen a little; and we can begin to see, emerging from mists of barbarism, the higher purposes which enlist the sympathies of even the highest and most cultivated minds of these last days. It is a battle now for a better form of exist-

ence, a more peaceful life, and a struggle to defend and perpetuate that life in the face of attacks of those not yet advanced beyond the earlier stages of humanity. In the intervals of the wars by which peace is won, and opportunity, and a place for the new civilization, there arises a new form of struggle, in which there are no blows and no bloodshed, but only the sharp strife of competition in buying and selling, in producing and in exchange. When the militant form of society, whose normal condition is one of warfare, gives way even in part to the industrial, which uses force only as a means of protection, the old struggle is not ended. It has only assumed a new form. It has become the contest of the market, the battle of money, the war which has for its aim the getting of a better living.

So, as we get down into the region where authentic history begins, we find larger data from which to estimate the changes in the character of this age-long struggle by which mankind rises. And their evidence points always to the disappearance of the old aims, and the introduction of new and higher ones. "The history of mankind," says Fiske, "has been largely made up of fightings; but in the careers of the most progressive races, this fighting has been far from meaningless, like the battles of kites and crows. . . . During the historic period the wars of Europe have been either contests between the industrial and the predatory types of society, or the contests incident to the imperfect formation of large political aggregates." That means that even where force has been

the means, and bloodshed the dreadful condition, the purpose of the struggle has been something higher than for plunder or for land. It has shifted to the higher effort for greater security in the rights by which society subsists, and the individual is secured in his own best development. It has had in view the amelioration of society. It has sought the establishment of more rational modes of government. It has aimed at more freedom, and a better chance of life's good for the individual. It has contemplated the restriction of tyrannies and the removal of injustice.

With these new aims have come new methods too. The conflicts of the historic period have not all been those of arms. They have often been the bloodless battles of brain with brain. They have been waged by statesmen in legislatures, by reformers in pulpits and in schools. They have been won by the suffrages of the many, uniting in resolves in which the world has quietly acquiesced. It is not always easy to see in the new and peaceful methods of later centuries any connection with the rough feuds and violent measures of the primitive man. But they are all the outcome of that one universal law, that there is no good thing won without struggle, and that every struggle brings the world nearer to the triumph of the good. Those terrible chapters in the Old Testament which you and I read with such a shrinking, and wish were out of it, because they seem to us so out of harmony with a revealing of a Divine will, are simply the rude manifestation in a rude peo-

ple of this old and comprehensive law. They were the efforts to establish the body politic, the national life of Israel, long enough for its ideas to germinate and take root. The Christian of the future will one day read the story of our Revolution as we read these. The wars which shattered the Roman Empire were battering down an outgrown state in order that a new and better might be reared. The struggles of the Reformation, consecrated to man's spiritual freedom, were perhaps the loftiest in motive on which man ever had entered. The rise of the Netherlands was a struggle for a vital principle in the existence of society. The French Revolution was a terrible outbreak, in which imbruted man struck for a freedom which should make him less a brute. In our own history, of the two great wars which have really reached any profound depth in the national life, the war of the Revolution was fought in behalf of the pacific principle of equal representation, the war of the Rebellion was fought to maintain the peaceful principle of federalism. Both of them were wars in behalf of peace, struggles which helped forward the day when such strife shall become unnecessary.

So it is struggle and struggle, over and over again, from age to age! Only the objects change for which the struggle is made, and the battle won. It is no longer for a dinner that men fight, for the fish to be caught in a particular river, the deer that roam in a certain forest. They strive now for principles, for ideas, for rights, for moral ends, for justice, for equity,

for law, and for peace. To be sure, there are still some of the old-fashioned wars, fought with the old-fashioned weapons, ay, even for the old-fashioned objects, for bread and for meat. Because all the old barbarian is not expelled from humanity, and because, alas! there are some who still lack the simplest necessities of life, and for whom society provides no place, no work, and no recompense. But, after all, the warfare is urged on a far higher plane, the aims are broader, and the weapons finer and more effective. Mind is in the ascendancy. Conscience has the lead. The persuasions of reason are more effectual than the spear, the sword, or the rifle. Votes go farther and accomplish more than volleys. The voice of the teacher and the preacher replaces the shout of the warrior. The world is nearer still to the ideal of the vision, the victory of the righteous, and the glory of the white-robed throng. These very wars are for the sake of the highest principles. And they point to a time when the battle shall be without blood, and the triumph be dimmed by no tears.

For who does not see that this incessant movement of the human race implies the prevailing power of righteousness? Who fails to see that in all these later struggles the victory lies more and more with the right? The new civilization gives an ever enlarging power to the good. Its struggles are more and more in the interests of man's higher nature. He used to fight for his stomach; now he fights for his intellect and his conscience. Once the battle was to the strong arm of force. Now it is to the vigorous

mind or the unyielding moral sense. Once men believed that God was on the side of the strongest battalions. Now they are learning that not all the armies that ever were marshalled are able to maintain a lie, to keep up an imposture, or to fix a tyranny upon the human race. They are learning that there can be no permanent triumph for evil. It suffers more by winning than by defeat. The only real victories are those of righteousness. The only real victors are they in robes of white.

Now, one great and comprehensive reason for this change in the field and the methods of struggle is the change in man's own nature, the working off of the animal parts, the inheritance of this flesh, and the unfolding of his moral and spiritual nature. For as soon as man begins to grow at all he grows toward goodness. The progress of the human race is a progress up, and not down. It is a progress toward spirituality, not toward animalism. It is a progress toward order, and peace, and obedience, and law. To secure this progress involves a struggle in man's own heart. It involves the wrestle between the flesh and the spirit, selfishness and the growing spirit of love, lawlessness and righteousness. The first ambitions of the human heart were in the direction of prowess, skill in arms, strength, and capacity of body. The first heroes were warriors and hunters, men eminent in those lower powers which give success in the grapple with the coarse elemental forces which man must master before he can rule nature. Then came a period of new ambitions and new accomplishments.

Nimrod and Samson were no longer the greatest heroes. There is a skill born of the understanding, and power which comes of knowledge; and this was the next stage of admiration and ambition to which man advanced. Mercury was now his god, and Hercules was no longer more than a demigod. And finally he came to see that there was an ideal of character higher even than the intellectual; and moral aims and moral power grew to *be* more and *mean* more than force or craft, strength or wisdom. And the heroes of the last stage are the Luthers, the Wilberforces, the Garrisons, — ay, Wesley and Augustine and Paul. As man grows up from one ideal like this to another, he is involved in struggles within himself. First he strives with muscle, then with mind, and then with heart and conscience. The field of the conflict shifts within him, as he strives to master one after another the difficulties of matter and the elements, the problems of knowledge, and the tasks that conscience sets. But all the strength he ever gained, from the time when he slew the mammoth to the day that he abolished slavery, man has evolved in himself by patient and persistent struggles, the labor and the travail of ages. This strength has risen in its character, from a mere power of eye and hand and foot, to a command of the very secret forces of heaven itself, the resources of righteousness and the faculties of love.

Thus it is that all the long look backward to which the text necessarily leads us, shows us one steady conflict along the whole way from the dreary lowlands

where the human race begun, up to the fair plains where now it builds the cities of its pride and power. Man has fought his way to the higher life. All his upward struggle has pointed to a time when good shall triumph over evil, holiness prevail over sin, and the final victory rest with the white-robed ones, cleansed in the blood of the Lamb.

That is the meaning of all this strife, this eternal battle from the beginning on till now and even beyond. It has all tended toward the victory of righteousness. God must triumph, and all the brood of evil things that infest existence be destroyed. That was the meaning of the struggle for existence which peopled the earth with living creatures, each the best of its kind. That was the meaning of the struggle between man and beast which gave the dominion of the earth to man. "The seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head." That was the meaning of the struggle for sustenance and dominion which pushed the vigorous tribes of Asia ever westward, bearing with them a better civilization. That was the meaning of ancient wars with all their pain and loss. All these old struggles drive straight toward the moral realm, and the life of the spirit of man. All the strife within his own heart, as the centuries have passed, has looked to the rule of the best in man over the worst, the moral over the animal, the good over the evil. The very first conflict that ever startled the face of the earth was the beginning of a struggle which was destined to end in one way and only one,—the victory of righteousness, and the

establishment of holiness as the normal condition of all creatures.

What then? Is all struggle to end with the triumph of good over evil? Will there be no more conflicts in the new creation? Shall the habit of striving which man has acquired in all his long years of apprenticeship on earth be useless, and have to be unlearned? Shall we never more feel the old thrill of excitement as we turn to some new task and grapple with some new antagonist in our way? Will growth and progress come without effort, and the life of the future be an easy and exertionless jaunt down the everlasting ages? That does not follow at all from the truth that the culmination of the ages is to come in the triumph of the good. There are struggles which bring no pain. There are battles which involve no blood nor tragedy. Take evil out of the case, and struggle becomes a joy. It is not difficult to conceive of a life in which all effort will be joyful, and the most severe struggles productive of the keenest delights. The struggle of the musician with a hard composition is no hardship, but a glorious pleasure. The task the scholar sets himself, to which he gives himself with relentless industry, becomes the desire of his life. Newton, writing the "*Principia*" with infinite toil and sacrifice, was a man to be envied. Horace Mann, giving his life-strength in the work of education, was fighting a battle in which there was no pain and no tragedy. Beethoven, spending himself in the labors of composition, framing the master-music which was to charm and inspire the world, was in pain-

less travail. So let us believe it will be in that future when evil is abolished. Then we all may toil on, yet without pain. We all may strive, lawfully and joyfully, forever rising over new difficulties, spending strength and thought and love without one pang of bitterness or disappointment or grief.

This is a blessed thought whenever it comes to us. For it always finds us plunged in the very heat and turmoil of our earthly battles. It overtakes us weary, and hot, and begrimed with the fray. "Fightings within and foes without" molest and overwhelm us. As year after year goes by and brings no change, the heart fails, and our spirits ebb low. But courage, Christians! The end draws on; and the end is sure. It is not for naught that we are toiling and fighting. Loyalty and patience shall have their reward. The evils which afflict us are short of life. The good we think so slow to come will include the whole creation, and when it comes will stay forever.

For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main.

And not by eastern windows only
When daylight comes, comes in the light;
In front the sun climbs slow, — how slowly!
But westward, look, the land is bright.

